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CHRISTIANITY VINDICATED,

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO

*Mr. VOLNEY.*

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ADDRESSED TO

*Mr. VOLNEY,*

IN

ANSWER TO HIS BOOK CALLED

RUINS,

OR A

*Survey of the Revolution of Empires.*

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By the Rev. PETER ROBERTS, A.M. *K*

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Be ye sure that the Lord he is God—his Truth endureth from Generation to Generation.

100TH PSALM.

Imo ex omnibus veterum vel recentiorum scriptis, nullum est, quod de iis sublimibus argumentis doceat aliquid, cui tutó fidere possumus, nisi illud é sanctis monumentis desumptum fuerit.

BOYLE, DE STYLO S. SCRIPTURÆ.

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London :

Printed by J. W. MYERS, No. 2, Paternoster-row,

FOR WEST AND HUGHES, NO. 40, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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1800.





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## TO THE READER.

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AFTER the many very able Publications which have lately appeared in Vindication of Christianity, it may require some apology that the following Letters are laid before the Public; and the more so, as the Book to which they are written in Reply seems not to have been considered as entitled to an Answer.

The only Apology the Author of these Letters has to offer is, that however competent judges may have thought so of it, he has reason to believe that it has been, and is doing much mischief, and the more,

perhaps, because that objections, however unfounded in reality, if left unanswered, are not unfrequently considered as unanswerable.

The first, and a great part of the second, of these Letters, were originally written in French, in the hope that they might excite some interest on the other side of the Channel, where the truth is less known than it is happily on this. Having, however, consulted on the subject with an eminently learned and judicious friend, the Writer determined, in consideration of the circumstances of the times, to translate what was written, and pursue the subject in English, leaving it optional, if future circumstances should prove more favourable, to accomplish the original intention of publishing the entire in French.

The Author cannot conclude this, without returning his best thanks to the Provost

and Fellows of Eton, for a liberal use of their Library, among other favours to him during his residence at Eton; and to the Rev. Dr. Goodenough, Canon of Windsor, for access to the Library which belongs to St. George's Chapel.



3 NO 63

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## LETTER I.

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SIR,

**E**RROR is the parent of calamity. I acknowledge it. From the midst of ruins your lamentations for the fate of mankind are sent abroad, and to bewail the fate of men is to gratify them. They derive from such lamentations the means of consoling themselves for their weaknesses, and sometimes an excuse even for their vices.

But what can the words of mere man avail, when he wishes to lay down general rules of conduct. When he is to make others act in conformity with his own views, and subdue their mind to receive, as certain truths, maxims which never have been, perhaps never will be, demonstrated? On such occasions, Sir, it is necessary to resort to

supernatural means to transform the imagination of an individual into a Genius of ruins and of tombs, whose voice cries out from the scene of desolation, and if it does not prevail over sturdy reason and information, it is, at least, a character well supported. A character, it is allowed, should be drawn from an original which is held to be a real existence. The effect is a convincing proof that the sentiment of a Supreme Being is, in reality, a natural one, and that the sentiment of a supernatural being an agent of good acting intermediately between the Supreme Being and man is such also. But granting this, you surely will not require the genius of tombs and ruins to be received as any other than a personification of the genius of Mr. Volney. Really, Sir, this would be too much to be allowed. Since, then, the voice is the voice of Mr. Volney, we can perceive more clearly what we have to consider.

In writing on a subject of such vast importance to mankind, however ornamental it may be, a visionary being does not offer a fair and simple view of the subject. Catch-



ing the imagination by a fabulous imagery, is a species of anticipation unworthy of the subject, nor is it easy to see how it is very consistent with the search after truth, where such is the avowed purpose. A similar objection lies against asserting any thing farther than as private opinion, which is properly such. Thus far every author has a right to go, but no farther; and in matters of serious discussion it can be least of all admissible in one who declaims against impositions on the fancy to practice what he so severely censures.

Permit me then, Sir, to ask, is it the intention of philosophy to substitute spirits and geniuses for ghosts and fairies? Is it thus it pretends to cure superstition, or to give weight to its dictates; by making them to proceed from the lips of an imaginary being. Alas! how perfectly is man aware of the feebleness of mere human power over the understanding and the heart, when he dares to offer a moral principle without a divine sanction? I mean not this, Sir, by way of reproach; it is a truth of which I am so deeply convinced, that if I am endea-

vouring to oppose what appears to me to be a dangerous error, I beseech that spirit, which is the source of all truth and all perfection, to grant us both his illumination, and to guide our steps to that good which he alone can fully discover, and that in seeking the fruits of the tree of knowledge, we may find those also of the tree of life, and others partake of the blessing.

In perusing many works of modern times, one is apt to suspect that the age of the schools is revived, wherein all things were established by maxims, and that the aim of science being extended beyond the bounds of the human understanding, the pursuit of it had led first to incredulity in some points, and then to a general scepticism. Still, however, it is a duty to seek the truth, at all hazards; but it is a duty yet more sacred to beware of the consequence of an unfounded principle upon others, and at all events to prevent mischief. If it be true that it is very difficult to reduce morality to a rigorous demonstration, and that maxims sanctioned by ignorance, and formally promulgated by men esteemed learned, have

been erroneous and fallacious, what shall we say of that levity with which general principles are daily laid down, under which, as under gigantic chiefs, all is arranged for a terror to the adversary. There are some men, Sir, who perceiving that truth is bold, seem to conceive that whatever is boldly advanced, will be received as truth, and the indolence of readers has given credit to the supposition. It is in some cases a loss not to coincide with this idea: For instance,

In your 6th chapter, that *On the original state of man*, I find a passage which is very striking, and which is, I presume, intended as a specimen of the system developed in the sequel. You assure us that, “ In the  
 “ origin of things, man, formed equally  
 “ naked both as to body and mind, found  
 “ himself thrown by chance upon a land  
 “ confused and savage. An orphan, deserted by the unknown power that had  
 “ produced him, he saw no supernatural  
 “ beings at hand to advertise him of wants  
 “ that he owed merely to his senses, and  
 “ inform him of duties springing solely  
 “ from those wants.”



What a sublime idea does this give of the faculties of man. What could ever seem a difficulty as a matter of faith if what is said here could once be received as certain? It requires a superior effort of imagination to conceive a being, the most perfect of the inhabitants of earth, formed by he knew not whom; thrown he knew not how, or where; to do he knew not what. Permit me to ask you, where and whence does all this appear? You have, indeed, Sir, asserted it, but then all history in every nation where a history exists, and all tradition among savages who have tradition, assert the reverse. To all this testimony, then, you must oppose your own assertion. I have said, Sir, that it is sometimes a loss not to coincide readily with assertion, for in this case the labour of investigation of facts would be very superfluous, and systems might be made for the resolution of any doubt or difficulty without trouble, and when boldly published might have an equal chance of success. But there are some who cannot so readily acquiesce; readers who call for reasons and facts. There are those who will demur against the belief of an effect without an adequate cause, and

no less against a wisdom inconsistent and inconsequent. They will say, that man must have been the effect of a superior cause, that even were atoms jumbled into a world, or alphabets into an Iliad; the atoms and alphabets must both have been *predisposed* in their *form* and *relations* for particular applications, and that much more does man appear evidently the work of design and of a being far wiser and more powerful than himself, and that therefore the first man must have been provided and instructed sufficiently for his original state, and also as to the intent and end of his formation sufficient for the direction of his conduct: and this is what all history, simple and mythological, affirm.

Between the two systems there can be no hesitation. Assertion, unsupported by fact, falls of itself. Nor is this all. According to such a system, what is the sentiment which must necessarily arise in the heart? Those who have studied human nature ever so little will shudder at the thought. What! did he who created man that moment abandon him? What has any dogma of super-

stitution more barbarous than this? If Paganism has taught the existence of an evil principle, it has also taught that of a good one, and preserved somewhat of hope for the miserable, and succour to the oppressed, and beneficence and affection to the virtuous. But it is, you will alledge, a question of fact.—Granted. The question is of such important magnitude, that assertion only cannot bear it out. To determine that which involves the dearest interests of mankind, no investigation can be too accurate, no proof too full. I will, therefore, willingly come to facts; it would be idle to content ourselves with a superficial view, through an atmosphere of clouds and vapours; it is on the earth itself, and amongst men, that we are to examine what the one and the other have experienced.

There is nothing to apprehend from truth. It is merely its false semblance that is dangerous. It is not the research which does harm, it is only the errors in the progress; the requiring of certainty where probability only is to be had, laying down uncertain premises, or drawing wrong conclusions, mistaking causes, and confounding effects,



and, perhaps, more than all the rest, the abuse of words. Let the examination be fairly made, and the result will be a benefit. Of the abuse of words there is an instance in writers on morals, which ought to be noticed. It certainly is customary, on speaking of Nature, to wrest the signification, and to make it stand for some indistinct being. The same may be said of the expression, a *secret cause*. Either puts the idea of GOD as a really existing being out of sight, the consequence of which is evidently Atheism, and too little care has been taken in avoiding the consequence. If, Sir, a man, as you represent him, were placed in his mortal state by *some unknown cause*, which must have given him the powers and faculties he is possessed of, man most assuredly is not the sole *fabricator of his felicity*. (Chap. 7, p. 38.) He is still indebted to that unknown cause for the means and the power to use them. But is, or was, this cause unknown? Sir, I do not know Mr. Volney, have never seen him, nay, have not ever met with a person who could assure me of his existence, perhaps never may. I ought then to say, an *unknown*

*cause* has formed the book on the Revolution of Empires. But it appears to me not only an *unknown cause*, but a cause that contradicts my reason. How, then, am I to believe you exist, or have existed? What am I to think of such a cause? If from any operation I am to believe in the existence of an operator, and to form an idea of his nature, ten thousand times more cause have I to believe in the existence and superintendence of God, who so disposed all things that his creatures have wherewithal to exercise their talents and their genius, and whose admirable works testify the power and wisdom of their origin.

## LETTER II.

SIR,

THE Genius of the tombs has rendered an involuntary homage to the Supreme Being. It is no less interesting to observe, that, your delineation of the principles of society renders a similar one to the history of Moses. “ Man (say you, chap 7, p. 42) by the sole aid of his faculties, has been able to raise himself to the astonishing height of his present fortune. Too happy would have been his lot, had he, scrupulously observing the law imprinted on his nature, constantly fulfilled the object of it; but by a fatal imprudence sometimes overlooking, and sometimes transgressing it, he plunged into an abyss of errors and misfortunes, and, self-love, now disordered, and now blind, was converted into a prolific source of misfortunes.”

Even from hence then it must be inferred, that a happy state originally pre-



ceded a disastrous fall; and by what means did he fall? By *cupidity* and *self-love*; man wished to exert his abilities beyond the limits assigned by his Maker, and hence the origin of evil. Curiosity or desires too far permitted may soon become fatal, in trying experiments on human happiness; and this is what Moses has taught. There are some learned men, who (I think erroneously) consider the Mosaic account of the creation as a mythology; I do not see the necessity; either way, the conclusion is thus far the same; that to transgress the laws of our nature, implanted by him who formed us, is to destroy ourselves and others; that whosoever set the first example, the same was the melancholy cause of most of the evils mankind has since suffered, and that this fall and degeneracy were calamitous. While we thus far agree and deplore, still, Sir, I cannot assent to the debasing state of deprivation of every former advantage to which you would reduce him.

You have, once, Sir, particularly dropt the word *virtue* (p. 50) the reality is so absolutely inconsistent with the only ener-

getic principle you allow to man; this *self-love* I mean, that it seems strange to find the name introduced; and yet, Sir, I trust a great and respectable portion of mankind would scorn a life and conduct of what is called pure *self-love*. Man is not very accurate in general, in weighing the motives of every action, but, of all motives that can be attributed to him this is the most despicable, the most pernicious, and if attributed in general, most unjust. Much commerce with mankind, where interests often meet and clash, will sometimes generate such an idea, because it is within a certain degree the avowed and fair principle of traffic and intercourse. Of all men travellers are the most liable to adopt this idea, they offer but perhaps a single opportunity of advantage to a class of people who live upon eventual benefits, and from their being able to travel, may be conceived able to afford more than natives, and the inference is often dishonestly extended to the utmost. Philosophers will take up the same idea from another cause. Pardon me, Sir, I do not mean such men as Newton and Locke, Leibnitz and Clarke,

but those who have of late bestowed illumination of so dazzling a kind upon the world, as confuses all relations of self and exterior objects. To such, Sir, self-love is a useful and a plausible motive; the word is *equivocal*, and whilst an honest man is borne down by the assertion, that he is gratified in his own consciousness by his probity, his adversary infers a right to act in the most opposite manner, because, that is the means of gratifying *his* feelings.

Is there then no case in which this self-love can be a generous and an amiable principle. What then is the difference betwixt virtue and vice, if not, that the virtuous man is gratified in making others happy, even at the expence of almost every other feeling of his own; and the vicious gratifies his own feelings to the injury of those of others: the former is the self-love of a Howard, or a Eustace de St. Pierre, the latter, that of a Marat. The whole opinion seems to be taken up from a confused conception of a principle universally admitted; viz. that man ought to consult his own happiness;



that this is the end of his being. The principle is just.—To be happy is the object, to feel ease and enjoyment, to arrive at a state of gratification of our desires; for no passion is evil in itself, nor faculty of the mind. The question then is not whether a man be gratified by his own conduct, or in the pursuit of certain objects; but whether that conduct, or those objects are right or wrong, virtuous or vicious, and his gratification is partaker of the nature of the objects, and is accordingly honourable or dishonourable. You are of opinion, Sir, that, “Self-love, which, when restrained  
 “ within the limits of prudence, was a  
 “ source of improvement and felicity, became transformed in its blind and dis-  
 “ ordered state into a contagious poison;  
 “ cupidity, the daughter and companion of  
 “ ignorance, has produced *all* the mischiefs  
 “ that have desolated the globe.” Yes,” (you add) “ ignorance, and the love  
 “ of accumulation, are the two sources of  
 “ all the plagues that infest the life of  
 “ man.” (p. 45.)

Here again we have an imaginary being scattering evil round, a Genius of destruc-

tion in a terrific form, rising from the philosophic system; and all the evils of man, derived from two sources only, neither of which, in itself, is necessarily such.—Ignorance, properly speaking, is no *cause* at all, no *source* of any thing good or bad; it is a mere negation, and signifies only the absence of knowledge, of whatever kind it may be; and however the ignorant may go or be led astray, it is not the ignorance which is the cause, but the wish or impulse to go on in a path unknown. These then two seeming causes or sources are in fact only one, *cupidity*, that is, *self-love*, or as it is explained, the *desire of accumulation*. This self-love, Sir, you lay down as the eternal spring of action for every individual, and which is therefore self-love in its most confined and sordid sense.

If it were a question of mere ingenuity, or of abstract consideration, it might perhaps be amusing to observe, how far an hypothesis, suggested at random, may be insisted upon, and supported by argument when detached from the observation of existing facts. When it was taken for

granted that the horoscope determined the character, it was strenuously supported by argument, and sometimes singularly countenanced by events; and when it was believed that the planets moved in circles, observations were sometimes found favourable, and sometimes forced into a degree of confirmation of the theory. In this last case the hypothesis was of the most plausible nature. The Supreme Being, said the Ptolemœists, is perfect, he must therefore act in the most perfect manner; what he has made to move in an orbit, must therefore move in the most perfect orbit, the most perfect orbit is the circle; therefore the orbits of the planets must be circular. The argument was formally correct; there was the fact from observations to appeal to, and yet, strange as it may seem, from Ptolemy to Kepler, systems were successively invented to reconcile fact to the hypothesis, instead of enquiring whether the fact was so. The fact at length proved that the planets do not move in circles, and that the hypothesis was an absurdity. In arguing on the human mind, it is no less in our power



to appeal to the fact. Is then this self-love, this love of accumulation, the eternal spring of action of every individual? Granting it, Sir, to him who asserts it, I have a right to vindicate others from the application. That the original spring of action is not the desire of more, but the present uneasiness, is plain even from this; that there are many circumstances in which *accumulation* ceases either to allure or to gratify at all, and many more in which it is merely a means of gratification. It would therefore be absurd to consider that as the spring of action which is but a means and not an end. That men misled by a sophism, into a degrading opinion of their own motives, may be brought heedlessly to act in reality from it, may indeed be dreaded. But, Sir, can it be the fact that a principle which absorbs every delicate and generous sensation of the human heart, breaks every tender tie of family affection and social intercourse, robs the valiant of his honour, the just of his merit, and the weak of his protector, can be the eternal spring of human actions? If so, Sir, what pretence have your Legis-

latures to be heard, who assume the task of instruction? To their representations it is just to apply their own principle, and trust them as we would trust *adder's fanged*. When the avowed principle is that which sets all mankind at variance, it is high time to beware. That it is not the original or universal principle, the fact will determine. In savage life, and in the lower orders of life, every where, to supply the passing day is the chief, and too lamentably sometimes the exclusive object. In commerce it is certainly the apparent motive, but it is even there in a great measure a necessity arising from the line of life, and confined to its proper object. In acquired properties it very often has no place whatsoever, as may appear, not from the continual complaints of extravagance, prodigality and profusion, and the much more melancholy testimony, the registers of imprisonment for debt, but from a more honourable testimony, the liberality with which every calamity is administered to. So much for the principle; what then is to be its corrective? An *enlightened self-love*. Here then the original principle is

*self*; its direct tendency, and its immediate object, is the satisfaction of the individual; and the way to correct it is, to exhibit a greater number of ways, in which it may be gratified without immediate risque to that same self, and of course since others are no farther concerned than as subservient, or as opponents, *enlightened self-love is the art of doing all possible injury to others, wherever they interfere with self-love, with the least possible injury to one's self.*

It is an art with which the world has already been rather too well acquainted, and it can have little obligation to those who wish to suggest improvements in it; and from the experimental application of the theory in France, it can have no desire to extend it farther.

I have dwelt longer than I intended on this subject. I have been induced to do so from the pernicious tendency of such a principle in itself. I cannot, however, dismiss it without a few words on the species of theory of human action which it presents.



This derivation of all human actions from a single motive acting in a single direction, is as if one should calculate the *momentum* of bodies by the impulse of gravity alone. What shall we say of a theory which resolves all the passions into one, and make all the powers of the mind subservient to it alone. Is it consistent with the fact? I trust I have shewn it is not, unless where this principle has unhappily taken root, and been adopted. What I have now to say to it, is merely as to its absurdity; of its influence or practice I may again take notice, and shew, that it is destructive of all confidence, all public advantage and private happiness. I may, indeed, beg leave to ask, whence is *the virtue of ministers* (p. 50.) to be derived, if such be the eternal spring of action? Whence are they *to temper the grasping selfishness* of others? When such a principle predominates in civil society, they must be conscious, that every one's desires are in opposition to their own; that this very principle excludes all dependance but on force or fraud, and must act accordingly. But *this tempering the selfishness of indivi-*

*duals, and keeping each man's desire in a nice equipoise, are to render the subjects happy; that is, to restrain every selfish man's desire is to make him happy; and, as every man, it is premised, is selfish, the way to make the subjects happy is to controul the original spring of all their actions: the mode has, at least, novelty to recommend it.*

## LETTER III.

SIR,

THERE is no field in which the imagination has more room to expatiate than the theoretic one of original government. The foundation and the edifice have been nearly as much varied as the persons or physiognomies of the writers; nor have the systems proposed in consequence been much less various. It is one of the easiest labours of the mind, because the materials are of so accommodating a nature as to be moulded into any form, and adapted to any situation. Viewing it in this light, one does not wonder at the scene you have exhibited of the gradations of political establishment; and were the subject less important, it would not be unenterprising, and, perhaps, not the less so from the contrast which the theory holds out in such brilliant colours to the historical progress, as far as it is found on record, in many respects.



Another circumstance, which is no less impressive, is, that out of the bulk of mankind, the system proposed does, in fact, relate to not so much as one fourth. The young, the old, the infirm, the weak, and especially the weaker sex, are not only not included, but seem to have been forgotten; and yet, Sir, to a legislator, of all the constituent parts of society, these might be deemed the very first objects of his attention. But *self*, Sir, and *the love of accumulation*,—I beg pardon; I acknowledge these principles of action are inconsistent with such attention. To return, then;—you admit an *infancy of actions*, and you add, “when  
 “men still lived in forests, all subject to  
 “the same wants, and endowed with the  
 “same faculties, they were nearly equal  
 “in strength, and this equality was a circumstance highly advantageous to the formation of society. The desire to engross  
 “remained *unexcited*, or *if excited*, as it  
 “attacked others in those possessions that  
 “were wholly indispensable, it was resisted  
 “with energy, and the very foresight of  
 “this resistance *maintained* a salutary and  
 “*immoveable equilibrium*,”

To this it is to be objected, that though men were nearly equal in strength of body, it is by no means the case that they are as nearly equal in strength of mind; that there may be a resistance not only to injuries, but to right and justice; and that the very idea of resistance sometimes excites opposition merely from emulation. It is easy to determine what is the proportional degree in the scale of happiness, not only of that which is here called an original state of society, but of most of the different states of which it is capable, from experimental fact, in nations existing at the present day. Is, then, this salutary and immoveable equilibrium maintained among savage nations by the foresight of resistance, or by necessity and natural affection? Must it not occur, on a moment's consideration, that a foresight of resistance is always accompanied with one of two other foresights; the foresight of *overcoming*, or the foresight of *evading*. It must, therefore, surely be, that there is an omission in the conditions of the theorem. As it now runs, I apprehend it to be this: *When the desire to engross is as the foresight of resistance, they will main-*



*tain an immoveable equilibrium; whereas it should be, when the desire to engross is as the foresight of resistance, together with the foresight of evasion, &c.*

It is somewhat extraordinary that writers on the theory of government should be so fond of recurring to a state of which there are few or no records, of which all that history or experience can teach us is, that it is so miserable, that the first opportunity of abandoning it has generally been thought a happy one. You allow, Sir, *equality could not subsist between families*, (p. 55.) Of what use is a principle which is *inapplicable to any society of families*? The only use of such a principle is a theoretic one; and, if so, is the constitution of man, abstractedly considered, so changed as to oblige us to have recourse to a principle which *cannot* subsist in civil society? Whatever the nature of man has been for the last four thousand years, it is still the same. It is not only more just, but more easy to consider man in the abstract from immediate contemplation; for, however external



circumstances may vary, his natural powers and relations are still the same ; and all his natural duties and rights may more properly, and much more clearly, be derived from them than from any other consideration. Society, being artificial, is necessarily *a series of experiments* on human nature, in order to investigate those regulations and laws by which the greatest general good may be attained ; that is, *the greatest number of advantages combined with the fewest disadvantages to the greatest number of individuals* : for any other general good is a mere imaginary phantom, nothing but a name.

Now, Sir, upon the principles of equality and resistance which you have adopted, society must be impossible. There may be an assemblage of men, forced together by external circumstances, but this cannot be society ; it will be only as a heap of sand, wherein every particle repels its neighbour with equal force, and the common effect is a common depression. Indeed, it is idle to argue on impossible cases. You allow, Sir, there *must* somewhere be *a power*, even in your own system, to temper the selfish principle ;

even then on your own statement the question must still be, *what* is that power, and *where* must it reside? From the variable nature of man, it is evident, that the best form of particular governments can be determined by experience only. That to all theory on any other principle it may be objected that the dangers or remedies can no other way be ascertained, and it may with the greatest justice be added, that the form of government under which a nation has been the most happy for the greatest length of time is the best.

The objects of government have generally been held to be security of person and property from injury. This expression is indeed comprehensive, but how much is there in it which does not appear at once to the eye. Two thirds of human life, and one half of the human race, the objects of protection and support alone, their property involved, and their safety assured in that of the remainder. Is it only for the hardihood of a robust age of men that policy is to provide? What then is the prospect of accumulation itself, when the feebleness of age

shall yield an easy victim to the rapacity of youthful vigour? Alas! how poor must that principle be which thus untimely fabricates its own subversion. How pernicious it has ever been to the welfare of society, you have, Sir, fully shewn, nor is it my wish to lessen the force of a single instance where it is duly applied. It is the strongest argument of the necessity of the subsistence of other and very opposite principles to the very well being of society. Civil society, however it may have originated in compact, cannot long continue, without some more stable form than that of actual assent. There must enter into its composition changes of circumstances and relations, in which a general and acknowledged adherence to particular fundamental principles must hold the place of actual assent, or the public mind will be for ever varying. You yourself, Sir, allow that a monarchy is the form of government to which all others tend, that it seems to you to *be the most natural as well as the best calculated for peace*; and I am persuaded it is so true, that I should decidedly consider this as one of the fundamental principles to which I allude. The



principle of such adherence will, properly speaking, be an accurate judgment; but it is not an accurate judgment considering self only, but considering self as a constituent part, willing rather to *cede* somewhat to the advantage of others, and desirous with its own to secure their happiness. I will not call this an enlightened self-love, because it is more than that, it does contain it; but it is as a consequence of a principle very distinct from *self*, and that is a principle of benevolence to others; by which the judgment is decided, to enter into society for the *common good*. It is then in the principle of benevolence only, that society can be firm and permanent, and this principle to be steady, must be founded on the belief of a superintendant supreme being, the common father of all his creatures.

Thus far, Sir, I have thought necessary to premise to the observations which I have now to make on your representation of the progress of society.

## LETTER IV.

SIR,

IF your system of government be compared with those of most other writers, the ease with which every evil of government is controlled or suppressed will certainly give your theory an advantage. The fear of resistance or opposition becomes in your policy an all powerful engine of state. The fear of resistance, in the first instance of individuals, was to restrain the love of accumulation; and in small states, if discussions arose, the fear of foreign invasion appeased the discord; and yet, Sir, in p. 119, you lament that the Chinese are subjected to such an influence, though surely Sir, if fear is to be the principle of justice, it should seem preferable that it should be a regular and uniform one, than a fear uncertain and unequal. But the inefficacy of the mean dread of resistance or punishment in numerous instances is sufficiently known. The extravagance, and as frequently the

injustice itself of the vengeance of an individual, and of the punishment of absolute power, are no less known to have been the very causes of having recourse to written laws and limited government.

But, Sir, as you say that *ancient states had in themselves numerous means of prosperity and power*, (p. 57,) it is worth while to examine what those means were, and whether modern states fall so miserably short of them as to create our concern.

The first mentioned is this: *As every one found his well-being in THE CONSTITUTION of his country, he felt a lively interest in its preservation*, (p. 57.) I am very willing to allow that, where every one does find his well-being in the constitution of his country, if his sense of it is what in society it ought to be, he will feel a lively interest in its preservation. But that there was greater happiness in ancient states must be determined by historical evidence. All we know of the states, either on the Nile, the Tigris, or the Euphrates, to which you refer, is, in general, that they were despotic. If the



maxim is meant to apply more to ancient than modern states, it is arguing from the obscurity of the subject, or rather no argument at all, since where little or nothing is known, little or nothing can be inferred. If the maxim is not meant to apply so, it is a mere *truism* applicable to every state and every country.

The next observation is of somewhat more consequence, viz. "*as every action useful to the public excited in it esteem and gratitude, each was eager to be useful, and talents and civil virtues were multiplied by self-love.*" (p. 58.) To this I beg leave to say, that if self-love, *in the sense you have affixed to the words*, was the motive, that the *esteem and gratitude* were very *ill bestowed*, and *no way deserved*. This maxim does in general belong at least as much to modern as to ancient states, nay, with more justice to the moderns. Truly, Sir, the gratitude of nations is as lively now as ever it was. In Britain, the names of Howel the Good and Alfred are still remembered; and if, by unhappy circumstances, France has wished to blot out the name of her

Henry from remembrance, the time may come when justice will be done to his memory once more, when that of the detestable enemies of his fame shall be forgotten, or if remembered, remembered but with abhorrence. But, Sir, did *every action useful to the public* excite its esteem? Are there no complaints of the sufferings and misfortunes of those who served their country well, and where the love of accumulation did not prevail; did the knaves always praise, and never find it their interest to oppress their fools? The expression may be strong, but really, Sir, I know not what other name to give them, whose love of accumulation is kept down solely and merely by the fear of resistance, or what other they can esteem the men who differ from them. The maxim is, if strictly taken, so contrary to what common experience suggests, that it will require somewhat more than assertion to establish it.

The third observation would be very advantageous indeed, if its consequence would follow in a limited state. “As every citizen  
“was called upon indiscriminately to con-  
“tribute his proportion of property and per-

sonal effort, the armies and the treasuries  
 “ of the state were inexhaustible.” (p. 58.)  
 Sir, I must acknowledge that I, for my  
 part, do not see how the conclusion fol-  
 lows. For it appears to me, that if a state  
 had an hundred million sterling of property,  
 and a hundred million of inhabitants, that  
 both the one and the other might really and  
*bonâ fide* be exhausted, though each contri-  
 buted his proportion, and served likewise in  
 person. I do not know how far you would  
 think it consistent with your connection  
 with France to communicate your discovery  
 of the means by which such a consequence  
 follows, but I am sure, that if by gratifying  
 considerably your love of accumulation, this  
 country could learn it, the purchase would  
 be of the most valuable kind. To have *in-*  
*exhaustible* resources would, to be sure, be an  
 amazing benefit. There is a sublime con-  
 fusion in the very idea. To be serious upon  
 it, is scarcely possible.

To go on with the rest; “ as the earth  
 “ was free, and its possession easy and  
 “ *secure*, every man was a *proprietor*, and  
 “ the division of property, by rendering



“luxury impossible, preserved the purity of manners.” (p. 58.) That where the earth is free, that is uninhabited, any one may become a proprietor, I readily grant, but how it comes to pass that property must therefore be secure, I do not perceive. Is the wolf less disposed to rapine, because the prey is unguarded, and in abundance? As to the second part of this article, it is by no means a consequence, either *that division of property DOES render luxury impossible, or that it preserves the purity of manners.* Luxury is a relative term, and as applicable to a Kamschatdale, when highly roasted by the hospitality of his entertainer, as to the Parisian, whose palate in the heat of summer is cooled by a variety of ices; nor is the inhabitant of New Holland less proud of the fishbone in her nose, than the Parisian of the diamond that torments her ear. Luxury, Sir, depends no further on property than as to the species of it, whether it is to consist in roasting or freezing, fish-bones or diamonds; it is the rarity or novelty, or the enjoyment extraordinary, that constitutes the luxury where-

ever it is, and nothing else; so that there may be, and always has been, luxury, and complaints against it, let property be how it will. As to *purity of manners*, this depends on a serious and awful sense of, not so much the danger as, the sinfulness of vice; and if it has been more general where property was small, it has not been so because of the smallness of the property, but from the very reverse, in fact though not in appearance, that is, from each person's possessing a portion of ground in security, and so having less temptation to deprive others. For, in a land thinly peopled, though no one may amass much specie, each individually is rich by having a property; whereas in a thickly peopled country there must be numbers who have *no real property*. Secondly, the probability of escaping punishment is much greater in a populous country, and still more in a populous city. And, thirdly, from the constant residence, and the value of a neighbourhood, the personal and local attachments are habitually confirmed and strengthened. This purity of manners is, however, no way peculiar to ancient states. It may be exemplified in any other, under similar circum-

stances. But it must arise from religion. It can flourish from no other root.

The next head has nothing very particular in it, but the supposition. "As every man ploughed his own field, cultivation was more active, provisions more abundant, and individual opulence constituted the public wealth." (p. 58.) This supposes that every man may have a field to plough, which is in many cases impossible, and would in still more, if it were possible, be absurd. If every man ploughed his own field, he must also be his own shoe-maker, taylor, carpenter, weaver, &c,

Having said thus far as to the foregoing remarks, the rest require little notice, viz. that, "As abundance of provision rendered subsistence easy, population rapidly increased, and states quickly arrived at their plenitude."

"As the produce was greater than the consumption, the desire of commerce started up." And



“ In fine, as certain places in certain  
 “ epochs combined the advantage of good  
 “ government with that of being placed in  
 “ the road of circulation and commerce,  
 “ they became rich magazines of trade and  
 “ powerful seats of dominion.” (p. 57, 58.)  
 These are true, independent of the preceding,  
 upon the very condition they include,  
 and so far may be applied to any state.

As to the states of Tyre, Babylon, and Media, that necessity introduced some great works, and increase of riches others, is to them only in common with other countries, but that they were *little oppressive to them*, whence can this be proved? At such a distance of time what authority could support the assertion, as to those countries? That works of greater extent and magnificence, in proportion to the territory, have been and are carried on in Britain, and without any oppression to the people, is a truth, which will make all that is here said a simple attribution of justice to the excellent form of her government.

Of these means of the prosperity of antient states, as here represented, some are ill founded, and those which are not so, are not peculiar to antient states. Where the liberty and security of persons and property *are* secure, a state must flourish; but to add, Sir, that in such states men could *display* “all the extent of their faculties, and all the energy of self-love,” (p. 60,) is in direct opposition to your own assertion, that “self-love, impetuous and rash, renders man the enemy of man, and of consequence perpetually tends to the dissolution of society,” (p. 50,) and “that it is for the art of legislation, and for the virtue of ministers, to temper the grasping selfishness of individuals,” (*ibid.*) If then the energy of self-love must thus be tempered, it cannot be *all* exerted, but I presume you mean that which you call an *enlightened self-love*, and if so, it should at least have been so specified. It would, it is true, have lessened the fulness of the expression, and, indeed, self-love restrained is no pleasing conclusion to the advocate of the principle; it was therefore more prudent in this respect to leave the mind to the full energy of the principle,

## LETTER V.

SIR,

IT is not without some pain that one can in many instances observe the manner in which the relation of established laws to the existing state of society is delineated. It would be well, if it were possible to limit the character of it so far, as to call it no more than superficial. Did the error rest with the sketch, did it no way further influence the minds of men than as a private opinion rashly formed, it might be safely overlooked. But when it throws a blame where it is not merited, when it requires a progress which prudence and sound policy will not justify, when it attributes the inconveniences of one state of society to regulations in a preceding, in which the causes of those inconveniences did not exist, and attributes to an evil intent what was merely the effect of circumstance, it is not easy to suppress a sentiment of indignation. There is a policy in making mankind think ill



themselves, and of each other. It is a huge stride towards effecting that depravity which is imputed. A man, who by a sophistical construction of his best actions, is once induced to admit a depraved principle to be the motive, though against a better persuasion contending with the latent fallacy, will sink in his own esteem, and by degrees lose his respect for that of others; and by this *art of sinking* in morals feel himself thrust deep as from the celestial mansions to the dwellings of devils.

Such is the deleterious tendency of this insidious mode of attack, which aims at the destruction of all public confidence, and would persuade men to abandon their strongest and surest holds by an unfounded suggestion, that they are not tenable. But however the ignorant and the careless may be so prompted to betray themselves, and to surrender all their hopes, on a first surmise, even they may learn to regard the intentions of the adversary with confidence, and to oppose him with success. The speciousness of general assertions may for a time confound the understanding; but it is sufficient

to point out the fallacy, to ensure that contempt of them in others, which those who deliver them do in general possess, whenever they are made the engines of affecting a community; since they cannot be ignorant of their nature when they apply them so.

To point out fallacies of such a tendency is the purpose of these letters; but were each to be noticed as it arises, there would be no end of it within the compass of any moderate volume; nor would it be worth while.

In the chapter on *the general causes of the revolution and ruin of ancient states*, (page 61) the ruin of such states is ascribed to depraved laws, arising from depraved manners. That depraved manners may, and do in many cases produce bad laws, is very true; but it is also to be considered that laws in themselves originally good may, without any depravity of manners, become occasionally bad ones, from the mere change of circumstance. A law which during a famine should forbid ex-

portation of grain, would be a good one at the time, but on the return of plenty would be bad. A law which in the infant state of society should command the actual services of each individual, would in a more advanced state be very inconvenient; it is therefore extremely unjust to lay it down as a rule, that when a law becomes prejudicial it is necessarily, or always, in consequence of a depravation of manners.

The intent of a law in general is to remedy or prevent an acknowledged evil. It may fall short of the intent in either case, but the intent is not therefore a bad one; the intent can be judged of only by circumstances at the time of its being enacted, and a fair consideration of them, surely would not attach any farther evil to them, than what such circumstances may clearly shew to have been intended.

That power, ambition, avarice, and other passions have interfered, and do interfere, in some degree, in all systems of legislation, need not be denied. It is acknowledged as a consequence of the



imperfection of the nature of man ; but to lay these down as the very principle of a system of laws, is an imputation that has been reserved for these latter times. I own, Sir, I am rather at a loss to conceive how you could seriously attribute such doctrines of civil rights (as you have done) to the founders of states. Of these the first is, that *power* constitutes a *right*, a position which conveys to the mind only a confusion of ideas and things. “ Because one man was stronger than another, this inequality, the result of accident, was taken for the law of nature ; and because the life of the weak was in his power, and he did not take it from him, he arrogated over his person the absurd right of property,” (p. 62.) The inequality, Sir, is a law of nature, but that it has not by legislators been held, that power alone constitutes right, every law that has ever secured person or property is a proof. The inequalities, here unjustly charged with a consequence, which follows only from a state of war, are in fact the very grapplings of society, because

that from these very inequalities there arises, not by any means a right of slavery, but a necessity that some should investigate, explain and direct, and others attend to and pursue what is for the common good.— You cannot be ignorant, Sir, that slavery arose from no other right than that of self-defence; that as a primary act it is allowed to be indefensible, and even as a secondary one, defensible merely on the principle of self-preservation. I am sorry to be obliged to enter into such distinctions even here; in the next paragraph there is one which it is still more unpleasant to find necessary.

That parental authority should have been considered as a basis of public authority in an early state of society, when the transition was so easy, and a model so obvious, is not to be thought singular, where the name of father was a name of endearment, of care, and protection, of reverence and affection. When a general conclusion is inferred, the premises must be intended as general; and if so, if fathers are to be held, according to your description

of them, what man can behold his child without a sigh? To me, Sir, it seems strange how you could prevail on yourself to draw so cruel a representation, one as unjust as it is cruel, as a general one. You say, Sir, (page 62) "Because the chief of a family could exercise an absolute authority in his own house, he made his inclinations and affections the sole rule of his conduct." If, Sir, his inclinations and affections are those which a father ought to feel, he is right in so doing; but this, which is the question, you decide in the negative. In the writer of this, Sir, it is a debt of nature to controvert to the utmost the decision, and he trusts it is the common debt of thousands. But the political conclusion is of importance? Be it so, Sir, but does it become an advocate of political to infringe upon natural justice? You proceed, Sir, thus: "He conferred and withheld the conveniencies and enjoyments of life *without respect to the law of equality or justice, and paternal tyranny*,"—paternal tyranny!—"laid the foundation of political despotism." (p. 62.)



I do not know, Sir, whether you are a father. I ought perhaps to be sorry that your filial feelings have been singularly exasperated, when you are carried so far as to make the abuse of paternal power the paternal character. The character itself, when its duties are fulfilled, has always, and with great justice, been held a model for governors, as uniting in itself all the best qualifications for the station. Whatever may have been the errors into which the abuse of it has led, there are none more dreadful than that, which the subversion of its just influence must necessarily lead into. Where the ties of nature are broken, what others are there which can be depended upon? Surely none. He who is not grateful for the first of blessings and the tenderest of cares, of which he has himself been the principal object, cannot be so for partial advantages in which he is less personally interested; he who places little confidence in a tried sincerity, must be suspicious and faithless elsewhere.

When in the sequel you admit that the spirit of rapacity is the great evil which

has disturbed all states, in this we are agreed, but when you described its activity as under the mask of union and peace, and under the name of supreme power, it would have been well to have added, that its primary object, as a means of gratifying itself, is *supreme power*. It has not, I believe, been sufficiently attended to or observed in this light, as the especial and ruling principle which particularly in a democratic form of government incessantly brings on a succession of revolutions, which as you observe, end finally in a despotic and absolute monarchy.

I am willing to admit and allow, that where this spirit of rapacity has been excessive in any government or state, it has been attended with the evils you mention; the truth will feel no injury from the censure of, and sorrow for an error. But, Sir, allowing this, it would be weak and silly to be deterred by the bug-bear term *despot*, from calling into question the application, and examining how far it is applicable. It would be weakness in the extreme to be induced to condemn every, or

any form of government because there may be evils in each, whilst there are wicked men.

You have given some observations of the means by which states have prospered, not of any great weight indeed; but, as I have shewn, some of them are generally true. The same may be said of the observations or the causes of the ruin of states; as to these I will only premise, that were they confined to abuses only, that did they distinguish the excesses from the due exercise of authority, and imposture from truth, they might have been of real use; as it is, they tend to nothing but confusion and uncertainty.

When you tell us, that “ sometimes a  
 “ people, jealous of its liberty, having  
 “ appointed agents to administer, these  
 “ agents have assumed to themselves the  
 “ power of which they were only the  
 “ guardians, have employed the public  
 “ funds in corrupting elections, gaining  
 “ partizans, and dividing the people against  
 “ itself,” (p. 63.) I answer all this has



not only sometimes, but too often been the case. And what then? The people are dishonest, and complain that their magistrates are so. Can any thing be more absurd! In fact it is not the dishonesty they are sorry for, but the superior dexterity in the use of it. Yet this is but *sometimes*, and there may in a *small* state, though democratic (which *you* think, and I do also, the *very worst* possible form of government) a long interval, during which it may be very happy. The argument, then, is nothing against the *democratic* state, but against the *prevalence of rapacity*, that is, *selfishness in its full energy*.

The next state noticed is the aristocratic.  
 “ In one country the chiefs equal in strength,  
 “ and mutually afraid of each other, have  
 “ formed *vile* compacts and coalitions, and  
 “ portioning out power, rank, honour, have  
 “ arrogated to themselves privileges and  
 “ immunities; have created themselves into  
 “ separate bodies and distinct classes, have  
 “ tyrannised in common over the people,  
 “ and, under the name of *aristocracy*, the

“ state has been tormented by the passions  
 “ of the wealthy and great.” (p. 64.)

You cannot, Sir, be ignorant that personal honours were originally attached to real services ; and that there are cases in which they are the only rewards that can be accepted for public services, and in particular by those to whose property a small increase can be no gratification. You confine the evils they have occasioned to the effect of their passions, and still the same principle of rapacity. It would not with such a delineation be very consistent to mention, that no body of men have been more free from selfishness, or more liberal of their lives and fortunes. England will not however forget, when she boasts of her great charter, that it was to this body, spiritual and temporal, she owes it.

The next head from its importance I mean to consider at large hereafter ; I shall now therefore insert it, principally to preserve your own order.

“ In another country, tending to the  
 “ same end by different means, *sacred*

“ *impostors* have taken advantage of the  
 “ ignorant. In the secrecy of temples,  
 “ and behind the veil of altars, they have  
 “ made the Gods speak and act; have  
 “ delivered oracles, worked pretended mi-  
 “ racles, ordered sacrifices, imposed offer-  
 “ ings, prescribed endowments, and under  
 “ the name of *theocracy* and *religion*, the  
 “ state (p. 64) has been tormented by the  
 “ passions of priests.”

Now, Sir, granting all this, that some-  
 times it has been unhappily true; does it  
 follow that there has been no real theocracy  
 nor true religion? certainly NOT; and before  
 I have done, I hope to prove fully that  
 you have no way established such a con-  
 sequence, and farther, to prove that Chris-  
 tianity is unshaken by any of your argu-  
 ments. The danger of the selfish principle  
 will indeed remain in full force, and I do  
 not wish to diminish the detestation of it.

By these three steps, treading on the necks  
 of commons, the peers, and the clergy,  
 you at length attack the sovereign.



“ Sometimes” (by the way how was this word omitted in the two preceding paragraphs?) “ weary of its disorders or  
 “ of its tyrants, a nation to diminish the  
 “ sources of its evils gave itself a single  
 “ master; in that case, if the powers of  
 “ the prince were limited, his only desire  
 “ was to extend them, if indefinite, he  
 “ abused the trust that was confided in  
 “ him, and under the name of *monarchy*,  
 “ the state was tormented by the passions  
 “ of kings and princes.” (p. 65.)

Where the power is greatest the abuse must be the most prejudicial, but in a *limited monarchy* you admit, Sir, there is *the best chance* for happiness; a century has confirmed the position in Britain; and it has been fully shewn from history that monarchy is experimentally productive of the good of the people more than any other form whatsoever. *The contest for priority* being *decided* in a state, takes away one, and the principal motive for change.

But to complete the revolution. “ Then  
 “ the factious taking advantage of the

“ general discontent, flattered the people  
 “ with the hopes of a better master;  
 “ they scattered gifts and promises, de-  
 “ throned the despot,” (is a limited mo-  
 narch a despot?) “ to substitute them-  
 “ selves in his stead, and disputes for the  
 “ succession, or the division of power,  
 “ have tormented the state with the dis-  
 “ orders and devastations of *civil war*.” (p.  
 65.) Thus, Sir, you have completed the re-  
 volution of human miseries, all a cheerless,  
 dark and terrific series of enmity and de-  
 struction ; there appears no pause for the  
 mind ; the path winding aloof from every  
 approach of the range of happiness, sinks  
 through the pestilential caverns of the dregs  
 of humanity, hurries on from precipice to  
 precipice, till it breaks out in a false glare  
 that astonishes only to perplex, while it  
 discloses a pathless desert that suggests only  
 despair. Such is the progress you have  
 traced of these alternate excesses of tyranny  
 and civil war, brought forward, not as the  
 paroxysms of unsound policy, but as the  
 very being of political existence.

It is very natural for any one to believe, that you may, nay, that you must, Sir, have been affected by the unhappy state of those parts of the east, where you have resided for a considerable time; an experience of a later date has shewn however that another state has suffered an accumulation of calamities still more dreadful from the same principle of rapacity; it has written indelibly in characters of blood, for the warning of future ages, that MORAL EVIL IS THE SOURCE OF POLITICAL EVIL.

It is now time to come to the remedies you propose. The one is a theory of the law of nature, generally so called, which you have not given; the other the destruction of all religion, which you have attempted. The happiness of mankind is no doubt a primary object; it is not one that ought to be treated lightly, and he who points out the most effectual means of securing it, performs an essential service to his fellow creatures. It is the duty of every one to examine, as far as he is able, and to estimate fairly the means proposed, and not to be led away hastily from approved



means, to deviations uncertain in their end; to prove all things, but to hold to that which is best. There is, it is true, no small danger in the intermediate period, between the starting of an objection, and establishment of the truth, which must finally prevail, where the moral conduct is affected by it; and therefore it is necessary to investigate and determine as soon as it can be done; nor do I imagine, Sir, that you will, in this respect, differ from me in opinion.

LETTER VI.

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SIR,

IT is now full time to come to that subject which even you yourself have allowed to be of the utmost importance in the influence it has had upon the morals of mankind, and to which, with others, I am willing to annex, an importance of infinite extent; not merely a temporal impression on the mind, but an awful and eternal determination of bliss or misery. It is not my wish, Sir, to seek occasion of censure, much less is it to reproach you with enmity: yet, Sir, it is a just ground of complaint, that where the welfare of mankind is so deeply concerned, the subject should have been treated with so little discrimination. In the friend to the morals of mankind, it might have been expected, that the errors of different religions might have been distinguished from the several moral doctrines of the different sects; and that, whilst the abuses were

pointed out, the moral rules, as far as they are of general use, should have been respected. Improvement is not, however, the system of the day, but invention of new, and, as far as it can be done, a total subversion of all old means, however approved, of profiting mankind. Whilst, then, no less than you, Sir, I lament the succession of errors which have brought misfortunes on every nation in its turn, I must still be permitted to respect those institutions which have been remedies, however partial, of the evils; and though you, Sir, were very naturally “struck “with the reasonableness of the discourse” (p. 77.) of a genius of your own manufacture, I ought not to let it lead either my own judgment, or that of others captive, or remain absorbed in that reverential silence with which, like the Babylonish monarch, you bow before the image you have yourself set up, and require the homage of others.

You mistake, Sir, surely, when you suppose that ill-judged or unhappy applications of religious principles must destroy the



principles themselves; but you mistake, Sir, still more widely, when you consider the application as the principle. The interpretation of the passions is never, indeed, a safe one; they bias too widely, but then they do not obliterate or erase the entire code. It is granted that the idea of defending or avenging the cause of God is an absurd one in its strict sense, though ignorant men and ignorant teachers may use the expression. But the idea on which it is founded is nevertheless a just one, and that is, not the impious one of adding to the power of God, but making use of natural means to obtain or preserve the free exercise of the worship of God, or to propagate the knowledge of religious truths. And if the zeal outruns the understanding or the precept, surely it is a subject of infinite regret. But has even this ill-informed zeal no advantage? Does it not secure mutual covenants and obligations, and all the social duties of a community? And if with the mixture of error it does so much, how much more may be hoped for when the error is taken away? In the vicissitudes of human affairs, and in the

conflicts of mutual passions and interests, wars have arisen and must arise; and it is awful when two nations make a solemn appeal to the God of heaven and earth as the omniscient and omnipotent judge of truth and equity; when both acknowledge their transgressions before him, and implore his assistance to prevail. An acknowledgment of his superintendence, and an acquiescence in the equity of his decisions, however uncouthly expressed, are still their true intent, and pledges of a wish to serve him. The wish to prevail is the patriot prayer of every country and every nation; it is the expression of the feelings of nature, for every endearment by which man is connected in society, and by which he is bound to promote that to which he belongs. To a christian it might be answered, we are commanded to pray. But you, Sir, triumphantly ask, why are we to pray to a God who is without variableness? A sophistical question is no great credit to any argument, much less on a serious subject. The absurdity corresponding to the question is your own. If the nature of the Deity be invariable, how

or whence does it follow, that there is to be no variety in his actions? Now, Sir, neither you nor any man can prove his immutability to be such as to exclude a variety of action and means to the same end; and on this ground alone prayer is justly addressed to him; not indeed to alter what is decreed, for that would be absurd, but to determine to a particular end what is not previously absolute. But you will say he is omniscient, and must therefore do what is right, and cannot therefore be influenced by human prayers. General terms, Sir, are very often the source of general absurdities. We do not know the extent or mode of the knowledge and power of God, much less how they are combined or exerted. We admit he is all-wise, that he knows our thoughts, our wants, and desires; and on this very principle we pray to him. That weak and silly men may be rash in their petitions, and vain in their words, we lament, but while we pity the extravagance, we will not give up the duty. If God be wise, where is that wisdom more resplendent than in the adaptation of relief to distress,



and power to a disposition to do well. We *are* weak, we *are* liable to evil, thus far is positive, and without these we could have no merit. In wisdom, in justice, the means of advantage are due; but in neither were it not solicited or acknowledged. It is then no weakness in the Deity to have formed man capable of his favours, and to grant them as they are deserved. It is in him good-will towards men, and from men it is glory to God in the highest. If, Sir, you would but for a few pages suppose a particular Providence denied, the barbarity of the idea, the ignorance and malevolence it would argue in the Deity, would be a topic much more copious, and more just. That the Deity is capricious, or supposed to be so, is your own idea; and the absurd collection of attributes you have given him could only be amassed by a most prejudiced choice; and in this assertion I am founded by your description of the doctrines of christianity, in which you have laid down the *peculiar doctrines* of the church of Rome, which are in themselves grievous errors, and are not christianity, nor the doctrines of the

New Testament, for christianity itself. It is no wonder then that the teachers should be no better treated; and not only them, but the teachers of all religious sects whatsoever. It is, in some degree, certainly a common cause, so far as their labour and care unite to instruct mankind, and fix some rule for their conduct, and some external and superior obligation to such moral duties as they were able to teach. And it is at least so far an argument of their good sense, that they never attempted to make any principle more than equal to itself: it was left to modern philosophy to propose to correct individual selfishness by general selfishness; not only to correct a principle by itself, but a greater degree of its energy by a lesser. Ignorance and error, when not wilful, are not criminal in themselves; if then in the search for the God of Nature, they, to whom he was not known, imagined his presence most immediate in the most impressive of his works; in the gloom of woods and caverns, or in the resplendent orbs of heaven; raging in the volcano and the storm, or amid a placid and smiling scenery, indulging and inspiring happiness:

it was an error in judgment, somewhat excusable in a state of ignorance; always to be pitied, and to be dispelled as far as benevolent activity could prevail. Some bolder minds would necessarily attempt to search more truly; some artful and unprincipled ones would endeavour to take advantage of a prevailing opinion. But from their very character it was necessary that the great majority should lead the way, and in themselves exemplify what they required from others. The superintendence of the Deity of some God, as the guardian of truth and justice, was the fundamental principle; and in their studies to attain to superior knowledge of the divine nature none have laboured so much or so earnestly than the teachers of religion. In humiliations and acts of contrition, however ill-conceived and ill-adapted to their end, a reverence for the Deity was the motive; and the priests, whether Bramin or Bonze, Mussulman or Christian, have practised the most rigidly what they believed to be right. I do not mean to say they were right; but they might be wrong without being impostors; it



must be a very weak or a very wicked mind that confounds them. He must be very little acquainted with the human mind who expects to find it always act within the limits of just reason, and good sense. It is therefore leading men astray to require more than they are capable of, and can be done only in order to induce a total neglect or contempt of what is within their power. From a traditional knowledge of a God, or from a rational belief of his existence and attention to man, and some imperfect ideas of his nature, the heathen priests endeavoured to lay down the duties of man to him, and to each other, as evidently his will in forming man such as he is; and what they saw darkly revelation has determined. But you are pleased to say in a triumphant manner, "They say *he* is incomprehensible, and "they have undertaken to be interpreters "of his will." Should I say, you, Sir, have undertaken to argue without comprehending your own premises, it might perhaps be a mistake, as the error of the argument seems to have been *intended* to confound his *nature* and his *will*. I do not

know how he exists or how he acts, but why should I therefore not know, that since he has given me eyes, it was his will I should profit by his works. It is almost a waste of time to controvert such arguments.

There is, Sir, a certain chain of duties, which, extending from the throne of the deity, binds earth to heaven; reverence for the deity induces respect to moral obligation, and regard for the co-habitants of earth as children of the Lord of all. To loosen every social tie, the first means is then to break that golden chain (by which we are not held, but) by which we must hold to be happy. To make us loose that hold you ask, "of what importance to the deity are the worms that crawl in the dust?" This, Sir, is not *reverence* for the deity, it is *affectation*, a miserable affectation of respect, the truest expression of a real disregard, or a real terror. Why, Sir, should any being that he has made be supposed to be unobserved by him who has manifested design and wisdom, in the formation of the very meanest beyond the utmost art of

man to equal? If he has displayed his power and his wisdom in all, there is none which may not justly be deemed objects of his attention. "What are the worms that crawl in the dust to him?" They are the creatures of his hand, and the testimonies of his existence, his wisdom, and his power. One species amidst the wonderful variety, blest with superior intelligence, has approached nearer than the rest to the divinity, and sensible of the advantage has converted it sometimes to the noblest purposes, in the endeavour to resemble that being, whose image it bears. It is thus that man tracing the earth in its progress, and the stars in their courses, has sought the path to immortality. While he admired he adored, and was grateful for every blessing; and trembling lest he should offend, his anxiety to atone where he had offended, was proportioned to his previous fear. When you ask then, "where was the efficacy of his practices, (page 88) did the prescriptions of penance work a change in the laws of nature?" I answer not in the variation of external objects, neither in the course of nature or the seasons, but in the life and conduct of the person.



When a bad habit is to be corrected, it must be left to the judgment of the person concerned, to use those means which may be most effectual, and it is an incontestible truth, that as a nation reforms itself, it becomes more just, more honest, and in a word, becoming more religious ; it becomes more happy. Do not, Sir, confound religion and superstition. The church of Rome has absurdly declared penance a meritorious act in itself, and you have taken advantage of it. Nothing however can be more contrary to the true spirit of christianity. It may be a means sometimes of reformation, but it can be no more, and no merit in itself, and when it does not answer this end is superstition, but when it does, as you ask, if God be good, how can he be pleased with your penance? I answer, because it is intended to subdue every propensity to offend him.

Your next question, Sir, is “ If God “ be infinite, what can your homage add “ to his glory?” and with these you exclaim, “ inconsistent men answer these

“ questions.” The most magnificent scenery that heaven or earth exhibits, the thousand tints reflected from the most glowing atmosphere or the richest landscape, all that is nourished by his heat, or irradiated by his beams, add nothing to the brightness of the sun.—This, Sir, must be the answer. Still, Sir, it is pity this play upon words should occur; as if the *giving glory* or *glorifying*, that is, the acknowledgment and admiration of the glory of God, conveyed the impious idea of *increasing* it by an addition. I will not, indeed I cannot call this arguing *inconsistent*, but I will say that such a consistency is a misfortune. Has the Almighty given us our best feelings without an intent of their being exercised on the objects they are best adapted? What could be more inconsistent with sound reason than such a supposition? Through the entire of what I have opposed in this chapter, you have argued from the abuses of knowledge and character to the subversion of both. Would you reject astronomy, because there have been and still may be astrologers, or arithmetic, because there are many silly enough to be-

lieve that there is a particular charm in particular\* numbers; as well might you reject religion because a Chinese or a Roman catholic flogs his idol in a storm, and because a Thibetian believes in the immortality of the Delia Lama, or a Roman Catholic in transubstantiation. As to monasteries they were an asylum originally to the wretched, and long continued so; they were the conservatories of learning, and if by long peace they were verging towards corruption, it was the spirit and zeal of a monk that caused their suppression. As to their sloth it was at least as good as the mischievous industry that works with pertinacity, to destroy the peace of thousands. If they have erred grievously, grievously have they suffered also. In a word, Sir, with all the errors and absurdities that have loaded it, religion, in every nation, has been of essential service; it has been and must be the only steady foundation of justice. That religion should

\* Whosoever wishes to be acquainted with the powers and propitious influence of numbers, will be amply gratified by consulting Bongœus de Numeris.



be purified from every species of error and superstition, is the most important object to all men, and this can only be effected by a fair and just examination, and a careful and accurate discrimination. The Mosaic and Christian dispensations are the only ones which have been able to bear this test. From the latter is evidently derived the idea you have expressed of “ a God  
 “ impartial and just—who multiplies the  
 “ inhabitants of every country with whom  
 “ order and industry reign, who gives  
 “ prosperity to every empire where justice  
 “ is observed, where the powerful is re-  
 “ strained, and the poor man protected by  
 “ the laws, where the weak lives in safety,  
 “ and where all enjoy the rights which  
 “ they derive from nature, and an equita-  
 “ ble compact,” (page 90.) There is how-  
 ever in this description of the power of the laws a fallacy latent, and that is, that the power of the laws is supposed not to be a metaphorical, but a real one. Now a law in itself has no power, it is merely a rule of conduct, and the power that enforces the observance and constitutes the general sanction is *the manners of the nation*;

and the manners of a nation can be divided only by its religious principles. The question of policy I shall leave now to writers on the subject, and consider your objections to the Mosaic and Christian revelation.

## LETTER VII.

SIR,

WHEN Moses exhorted the Israelites to observe the law which he delivered to them, he addressed them in these words, "I speak not with your children, which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm, and his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt, but your eyes have seen all the great acts which he did, therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day." Deut. Chap. XI. v. 2, 3, 7, 8. It is also recorded in Joshua, Chap. XXIV. v. 31, that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel." This appeal was then to the senses and the reason of the



people, and it was on the evidence of both that the effect was so durable.

When Jesus Christ began to deliver his laws, he told the Jews, "The works which the Father has given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.—  
 "SEARCH the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." John, Chap. V. v. 36, 39.

In the history of the Acts of the Apostles, it is recorded to the honour of the Jews of Berea, that, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the scriptures* daily, whether those things were so."

The great apostle St. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to, "PROVE all things and hold fast that which is good." 1 Thes. Chap. V. v. 21. And St. Peter says to the converts "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with

“meekness and fear.” 1 Peter, Chap. III. v. 15.

With these passages before me, what, Sir, can I say of your assertion, (page 922) that, “In *every* creed, the first dogma of “*all* religions is the prescription of doubt, “of examination, and of the right of “private judgment.” What less can I say, than that if it is applied to the Mosaic law, or to Christianity, it is not true. Nay every volume of controversy between the different religions prove, that they have not held such doctrine. The only infidelity condemned by Christianity in the New Testament, is that against conviction, or through neglect of examination; if some sects have gone ignorantly or arbitrarily beyond their authority, with them be the blame.

A creed, Sir, is a form drawn up for the use of the church, in order to comprize briefly those articles which are held to be of essential importance, and as far as a rule admits or excludes a member of any other society, so does this. The obligation to receive the laws of Moses, or of Christ,

extends, after a serious and conscientious examination of them, only to conviction of their being revelations. It is then most unjust to represent either, as insisting on faith without conviction, and much more unjust to represent the discarding of reason, as a preliminary to faith. The words which you have put into the mouths of the priests, (page 130, 131,) were certainly the best adapted to your purpose, because they are ridiculous and weak.

Some may be ridiculous and weak, but still well intentioned. Cruelty has no such plea; the priests you have drawn, so far at least, excel the people who desire them to set the example of suffering. In the revolution of France, I believe many thousands have died martyrs, and at least an equal number in exile, is this sufficient?—You represent the priest as terrified, because the people are enlightened. It must first appear, that what you call enlightening the people, is not a glare that dazzles, rather than a light that gives every object its true form and proportion. Those who teach the truth have no reason to be terrified, nor



does your fictitious alarm affect them ; how little ground of fear there is for the truth, an enquiry will attest.

The groupe which you have drawn together, of so many various religious classes, does certainly present an unpleasant view, but it is not of religion, but of the consequences of the losing sight of revelation, and of the ignorance, prejudices and passions of mankind. It is that on a subject so grand and so dear, there should be so many absurdities engrafted, and so many enmities fastened. Here, Sir, as every where else, you have selected all that can be opposed to religion in general, as well as to particular tenets, but have left it to others to investigate what advantages have arisen from it, which even in its most degraded state, has still given a confidence and stability to particular societies, which would have been sought for in vain elsewhere.

Yet, Sir, even in this delineation, unsatisfactory and unalluring as it is, even amidst this strife of *the potsherds with the potsherds of the earth*, there is that general

and concurrent acknowledgment of the existence of a superior power and intelligence, of a creator and his superintendence, as proves the very belief to be congenial and universally felt, as of the highest importance to man. I would say further, it argues the belief not only traditional, but traditional from a certain and determinate period, and place, from which all these nations have derived their origin. In the belief we see the impression of a deity on the mind of man; in the variety of forms and ceremonies of the representations, we see the weakness and partial views, but we see also the honest endeavours to attain, and to communicate happiness; and we see in it, Sir, the various gradations of intellect exercised on the most sublime of all subjects, from the poor African who kneels before his Fetiche, to the Christian who kneels before the revealed God of the universe, whilst the proud extravagance of the Atheist, unable to comprehend some things, and confounding others, would, with himself, plunge all mankind into the worst gloom of ignorance and despair. It is seen, Sir, at one view, how great the resource all

nations find in religious hopes and duties, and the danger and misery of forsaking the knowledge of the true God, and a dreadful accomplishment of the words of the holy apostle, that, " God had given them over " to a reprobate who *would not* retain him " in their hearts." Rom. Chap. I. v. 28.

With you, Sir, it will be unnecessary to contend that the Hindu religion is not a revealed religion, as you do not give to it any credit for so being; much less will it be necessary to contend that none of the rest are so in their present form, so much more involved in idolatry and fable; and so much inferior in their pretensions to a traditional revelation.

That all who believe in a Divine Providence and a resurrection should be anxious to secure their best state hereafter is very natural, and that the anxiety may sometimes suggest extravagant doctrines, and a false pride, dictate and insist upon them, deserves our pity, not our ridicule; there must be some harshness of temper, not very laudable to ridicule, even an absurdity which arises



from a good intention, and misrepresentation is still more censurable than ridicule.

If your statements of the origin of the two religions were correct, they would be arguments equally against Mahometanism and Christianity. But, Sir, with an inaccuracy very blameable, you first state that both derive their principles from the *same* books; as if *all the principles* were derived from the *same books*; and that the *same books* were admitted as *revelation by both*. Now, Sir, *neither* is the fact. Mahomet admitted the inspiration of part, if not all, of the Old Testament; and has in his Koran allowed that Christ was an inspired prophet, but he also admitted a spurious gospel, which very justly has never been acknowledged by the Christian church; and the Christians, on good grounds, reject both the Koran and the spurious gospel.

With Protestants the Bible, and the Bible only, is the basis of Christianity; with the church of Rome I have no immediate contention; I have only to say, that departing from Christianity to Heathenism, and lock-

ing up the Scriptures, she has left no<sup>\*</sup> choice between the acceptance of all her errors, and a nominal Deism, or a real infidelity; while, Sir, however, you argue against Christianity, had you treated it as favorably as you have done the Koran, it would have been more just, if not more convenient. Do not imagine, Sir, that I am deprecating your attacks, I do not see the necessity for so doing; I only wish you had quoted the Old and New Testament with the same attention as that with which you quote the Koran.

As to religious sects, they are the offspring not of religion, but of human nature, of ignorance, of pride, and sometimes of a scrupulous conscience, and a zeal for the truth. Ignorance finds difficulties, and it will find them every where; pride makes

\* When a Roman Catholic loses his respect for transubstantiation, confession, and his images and saints, he has no substitute by not having the Gospel; and he is indisposed towards the Gospel, as believing these errors to be its essential doctrines. This has been exactly the case in France, and must be the case wherever the scriptures are not open to all.

them and affects novelty, in order to attain distinction, and supports them to support the character. The sects which have arisen from a zeal for the truth have in proportion to their sincerity been tolerant, and it is a just tribute to the memory of Luther, that when mistakenly urged to intolerance, he stedfastly and successfully opposed it, and the church of England, in the zenith of her power, has followed his great example. As to the difference of sects, who agree in essentials, if professing themselves Christians, they persecute each other, they are certainly guilty of a breach of the first Christian duty to man, Charity. The conduct of their adversaries is no plea for them; they ought neither to persecute nor encourage error, but they ought to prevent and reform it, as far as they can.

Your objections I will consider merely as they oppose the plain and obvious sense of scripture, and where the quotation is an answer, will rest satisfied with it. You seem, Sir, to consider a rigid unanimity as a necessary consequence of a true



doctrine. It is one of those arguments which, under the plausible idea of perfection, are urged in order to overturn all principle; because, that as they require *more than humanity is equal to*; but, nevertheless, what all acknowledge they ought to endeavour to approach to, it is an easy mode of objection to a feeble mind. But, Sir, it is only a feeble mind, one very little acquainted with humanity, which will accede to it. It might as well be insisted upon that every one should prove and apply the same mathematical theory in the same way, or that all who can walk should go exactly in the same track and footsteps from any one to the other of two places, or should break down every obstacle in order to go in a direct line. These are mere visionary ideas when urged too far, sometimes puerile, sometimes pernicious, and sometimes impossible to be put in execution. It is enough when the nearest possible approximation is the object, and is carefully and wisely attended to.

You have collected, Sir, a great number of religious contradictions, in chap. 21,

and would infer from these much more than the mere circumstance of contradictory systems will allow to be inferred from them. All that can be inferred is, that no two direct contradictories can both be true, but certainly one of them may. Your legislators seem inspired by the genius which has already been so communicative. They tell the assembled people, "that the opinions  
 " which have hitherto governed the earth,  
 " produced, by chance disseminated in  
 " obscurity, admitted without discussion,  
 " credited from a love of novelty and  
 " imitation, have in a manner usurped  
 " the empire of truth," (p. 172.) and having thus prejudged and pre-condemned them all, they cite them "to a common  
 " and general examination." It is then no wonder that the examination is made to conclude according to the previous decision; it is happy that it is not irremediable.

The evidence of miracles you cut short, by informing us, that they who appealed to them began to relate the most *incredible things*. Now, Sir, the very question is,

*whether the things said to be attested by the miracles are credible or not* upon such testimony? but not satisfied with this you insist on all being given up, because all cannot be *reconciled*. Is then a truth to be given up because it cannot be *reconciled* with a *falsehood*? Such however is the logic of your legislators.

It is granted that a miracle is evidence only to the beholder, and that dying for any opinion, is only a proof that the person so dying believed it to be true. Truth of a proposition is the agreement or disagreement of the ideas, as expressed by the terms corresponding to them, and is perceived by the mind only, and this truth has no other mode of being discerned but by the perception of the mind. As to miracles, their distinguishing marks of Divine Agency is sufficiently evident in the object and intent of the miracle. "If Belzebub be against himself, his kingdom cannot stand."

Your legislators say it is easier for the whole human race to fall into error, than



for an atom of the universe to change its nature; their authority is not, indeed, very respectable in this case more than the preceding, since they do not tell us whence they learned it. If by an atom is meant a particle of matter, and by its nature its sensible properties, there is none that human experience can lay hold of which does not easily and almost perpetually change them. That men may err, do err, is too true; that they *all* do so easily fall into error, is an appeal to matter of fact, and let that decide.

In your statement of the doctrines of Christianity, you have skilfully brought the Roman Catholic forward to the attack. But, Sir, even in his hand you have put a sword of lathe; you have not given him even his own weapons, such as they are. You make him say, that, "the very circumstance of some of its dogmas being beyond the reach of human understanding confirms them the more fully," (p. 186.) That such an absurdity may have been advanced I will not deny, though few Roman Catholics would, I believe, assert it; it is sufficient

for me to say no Protestant would assent to it. Let us observe your statement of the doctrine of creation, supposed to be from the Bible. Moses has said, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and "that he rested on the seventh day." Now for the paraphrase: "God (after having passed an eternity in doing nothing) conceived at length the design (without apparent motive) of forming the world out of nothing." Moses has said nothing of the works of God before the creation of this world.—*Ergo*, God passed an eternity in doing nothing. What an inference! The motive of the design is not expressed. Was it necessary it should be? We wish to know it, perhaps; but our wishes are not the just measure of what is right with God.

He was *tired* on the seventh. This absurdity is again your own, Sir. The words of Moses convey no such idea: they simply state that he *ceased*; the work of creation being accomplished. Your representation of the fall is strange indeed. The words, *he was refreshed*, are, indeed, added in our

translation, in Exod. ch. XXXI. v. 17. The original is נפש which no way necessarily includes the idea of fatigue; literally, it is, *took breath*, and metaphorically applied, signifies merely ceasing from action; and answers as nearly as human language can express, what man may presume to conceive of the divine mind, when contemplating his great work, he saw that *all was very good*. You argue, Sir, from your own theory to the fact; that there was once a happy age, and that man by his own faults has destroyed that felicity, is testified by the traditions of every quarter of the globe; that the Deity might have permitted the fall, was a necessary preliminary to free agency in man; without a power of erring he must have been a mere machine; that the effect of mortality produced by it should pass to the descendants of our first parents, is no more extraordinary than that any disease should be hereditary, which we know to be the case; that the Deity permitted mankind to be *damned* for five thousand years is an assertion so full of horror, so contrary to the doctrines of Scripture, that nothing but a



most studied negligence of them could have prompted it. St. Paul expressly says, after a long enumeration from Abel to David, Samuel, and the prophets; that “these all died in the faith.” Heb. ch. XI. and St. Peter, that “in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.” Acts ch. X. v. 35. Is this any thing like an entailment of damnation? How, Sir, could you write thus if you did examine, and if not, how can you take upon you to talk of the truth?

That man is prone to sin the fall too truly testifies; that the effects of the fall, as it brought death into the world, should be cancelled by a resurrection to a happier life, was surely worthy of the Divinity. I will not stain my paper with your description of that blessed Son, by whose death we are entitled to the benefits; and not only we who believe, but all who earnestly seek to serve God in simplicity of heart, and whose want of faith is owing properly to want of knowledge—You could not but know, Sir, that the word Son is applied to him, not in strictness of language, but

to express as nearly as can suit our comprehension, a relation which is not, perhaps cannot, be to our faculties accurately defined. You are pleased to make a hasty skip over the reformers; and really, Sir, it was necessary, as they might be very troublesome; it is a concession to their merits you could not avoid.

In the argument of your Mussulmen, they have the full advantage of their ignorance. If they draw absurd consequences from incorrect notions, the fault is theirs, and not that of Christianity. It is said (1 Tim. chap. VI. v. 16.) of the God and Father of all, that *no man hath seen him nor can see him*; and from such a nature, infinite and perfect, an immediate communication to man is not possible. That there may be, therefore, *an intermediate being* who proceeded immediately from him in a manner different from any other being, is what no one who believes there was a creation can deny. When you say, an infinite and immaterial God transforms himself to man, you make use of an obscure term in order to make out an objection. What is the

very idea of infinite as applied to the Deity, or indeed, any other way? Is it not merely a confused one, of somewhat past our comprehension? What idea, Sir, have you, or can any one have, of the agency of superior beings? Cannot the sun shine because a blind man cannot comprehend *how*? or can his light have no particular effect on this earth, because it illumines the whole system, and perhaps the universe? Why, Sir, should not he, by whom all things were made, reveal himself to his creatures? Why not choose the mode and character in which to do it, whether under the law or the Gospel? Surely, Sir, you forget it was not *the Father*, but *the Son*, (who derives his being and attributes from the Father) who appeared in the flesh. Why he who was the efficient cause, by whom the world was made, should not visit that world and reveal himself to his creatures in the form of man, a confused idea can be no ground of objection. As to his being immaterial, so is our spirit, and yet it actuates the human body; and until it can be proved that a spirit of a higher nature cannot, (indeed there are sufficient grounds to believe the contrary)



the objection is of no weight. Would you, Sir, be at the pains of reading Saurin's sermon on the difficulties of the Christian religion, you would find them most ably discussed; and had you done so, it might have lessened the number of your objections, and it might be hoped have an effect still more salutary in your own mind.

Your objection of the savage tribes has already been answered (p. 96); for the evidences I refer you to Grotius and Bennet, each in himself a host. Let us come to your rabbi: "A Jewish rabbi then said," (that is, Mr. Volney assuming the character) "for the general facts we are indeed "sureties." Thus far then you admit the Jews to acknowledge, and *they* admit it too, which is of real importance. We admit on our part also, that they are "the "trunk," if you please to phrase it so, "on which we have been grafted;" and what then? Why, say you, "it follows "by an inevitable dilemma, that either "our law is from God, and then theirs is "a heresy, or our law is not from God, "and then whatever proves its falsehood is

“destruction of theirs.” Such is the dilemma called inevitable. If so, it must be to wits of a very slender dimension indeed; the merest copyist of the law could have told you, that by this rule the greatest part of the Talmud is a heresy, since it is grafted on the law. The argument, miserable as it is, asserts, that if the Deity has given one law suited to particular circumstances, and when those particular circumstances exist no longer he gives another, the latter must be a heresy; that is, I suppose, false or inconsistent with his having given the former. You are welcome, Sir, to the whole force of your dilemma.

To the rest of your rabbi's objection we will cry neither sacrilege nor blasphemy, neither will we set our own indignation in the place of argument. The argument is not so formidable as to require unusual means; and if it were, those would be equally unworthy of, and unserviceable to the truth. The first objection your rabbi makes to us is this: “You have imagined “a spiritual Messiah, where our prophets “speak only of a political King!” The

word *political* is here used equivocally: every king, every governor of men, may be denominated a *political* one; for policy and government are synonymous. The word, which is correlative to spiritual, is temporal; and the objection, to mean any thing more than a definition, must mean that the prophets speak only of a temporal king; and if so, your rabbi must have been very inattentive both to the Scriptures and the writing of real rabbies. As to the mystical interpretations (Note 26) of the doctrines of Christianity, the doctrines themselves are no way affected by them. The fathers had no immediate revelation, and their arguments being founded on the Gospel, are valid no farther than as proved by the Gospel. But to return to the objection.—In the Jerusalem Targum, a work most assuredly not Christian, the Messiah is depicted as arriving under two different characters, as Ben Joseph, and Ben David; the first in tribulation, and the second in triumph; that the first was to live in tribulation; the second to raise the dead, and assemble all the Jews at Jerusalem,



where they were to live happily, and die a second time ; after which, says Aben Ezra, “ my opinion is, they will rise again at the resurrection of the just, and in the future state they will neither eat nor drink, but enjoy the glory of the divine Majesty.” See Buxtorf Syn. Jud. chap. I. Some of the rabbies have, indeed, been inclined to interpret the prophets as speaking of a temporal prince; but what idea, Sir, of a temporal king do the following extracts from the prophets give you?

“ The government shall be upon his  
 “ shoulders, and his name shall be called  
 “ Wonderful! Counsellor! the mighty God!  
 “ the everlasting Father! the Prince of  
 “ Peace! Of the increase of his govern-  
 “ ment and peace there shall be no end;  
 “ upon the throne of David and his king-  
 “ dom, to order it, and to establish it with  
 “ judgment and justice, from henceforth  
 “ even for ever!” Isaiah, ch. IX. v. 6, 7,

“ The Lord hath laid on him the ini-  
 “ quities of us all. He was oppressed, he  
 “ was afflicted, yet he opened not his

“ mouth; he was cut off out of the land  
 “ of the living; he made his grave with  
 “ the wicked; therefore will I divide him  
 “ a portion with the great, and he shall  
 “ divide the spoil with the strong, because  
 “ he hath poured out his soul unto death;  
 “ and he bare the sin of many, and made  
 “ intercession for the transgressors.” Isaiah,  
 ch. LIII. v. 7, 9, 12.

The first of these quotations asserts a  
 divine nature; the second the death and  
 resurrection of the Messiah, previous to  
 his glorious reign; and his atonement and  
 intercession for the sins of mankind, in  
 words as strong as language can express  
 them. To quibble with the Scriptures is  
 to trifle with salvation. The plain sense is  
 evidently this, and this spiritual power of  
 the sublimest nature, over death and the  
 grave, in future judgment and in mercy.

Daniel says, there was given to *the*  
*ancient of days* “ an everlasting dominion,  
 “ which shall not pass away;” chap.  
 “ VII. v. 9, 14. And that many of them  
 “ that sleep in the dust shall awake, some

“ to everlasting life, and some to shame and  
 “ everlasting contempt;” ch. XII. v. 2. Is  
 this, Sir, a temporal kingdom, or a spi-  
 ritual one? An everlasting kingdom, a king-  
 dom of righteousness and peace, must be, in  
 every appropriate sense, a spiritual kingdom.  
 We derive, say you, our doctrine of *the*  
*conception of the virgin from a phrase wrested*  
*from its true meaning.* Now, Sir, either  
 that phrase means something, or it means  
 nothing; either it means somewhat ex-  
 traordinary, or it is needless and insigni-  
 ficant. It is said to be *a sign*, (Isaiah, VII. v. 14.)  
 and to be a sign no other meaning could  
 give it consequence. Your rabbi says, Sir,  
 we construe every thing as we please; I see  
 no right he has to make the objection when  
 he does the same himself, were it so; but,  
 Sir, it is not so. A Christian dares not  
 wrest the Scriptures but at the hazard of  
 his salvation; if he wrests them, the ex-  
 ample of the adversary is no plea; it is to  
 his own ruin. 2 Pet. III. v. 16.

The doctrine of the Trinity has been so  
 fully proved to have been in some degree  
 known to the Jews, by Dr. Allix, in his



Testimonies of the Jewish Church, as to make it needless for me to insist upon it. That the same idea has prevailed in several profane nations is true, and seems most probably to be accounted for on the principle of a general tradition of it; but this probability is not sufficient to ground an argument upon. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity depends on revelation only; it is equally distinct from that of the Platonists, and that of the Hindus. As to the doctrine having been *admitted* into the Christian code during the three first ages, it is not the fact; it is in the original code, and it is there alone we look for it; and so indelibly is it fixed in the New Testament, that Christianity cannot be severed from it without the most violent injury and perversion of the text, and a dereliction of all plain and evident interpretation.

LETTER VIII.

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SIR,

YOU have invited your adversaries to the examination of matters of fact, and it is a circumstance of no small satisfaction, that you have done so; or rather that it is the principle which must determine the question as far as it can be investigated. The books of Moses have stood this examination for more than two thousand years, and have been the more confirmed by every trial; they have been the admiration of the learned, and the confidence of the good. Length of time must have left some things relative to occasional occurrences or customs obscure, but this is a case common to all history, and affects that of Moses less, perhaps, than any other.

The history is evidently confined to one subject, that is, the temporal settlement and policy of the Jews in the promised land; and it is very observable, that whatsoever is irrelevant to this purpose, is, I

would almost say, scrupulously omitted. The antediluvian history is a very rapid sketch of the descent of a particular family, and a very few concurrent circumstances; and though it gradually becomes more copious as it approaches the time of Moses, the narration is full only where it was inevitable. In writings of such a nature, who does not see at once that silence is no argument at all of the non-existence of a fact or doctrine unmentioned by the author? that it is no proof that Moses knew nothing of a future state, that he has not mentioned it in express terms? Your Mobed, Sir, goes farther; he asserts that there is "no trace either of the immortality of the soul, or of the life to come, or hell, or paradise," (p. 194,) in the writings of Moses. Now, Sir, were this the fact, it would be no argument that he did not believe in them, for the reasons above-mentioned. But it is not the fact. There are some evident references to a future state in several parts of the Pentateuch. In the very third chapter of Genesis, mention is made of the tree of life, and man is expelled from Eden, lest he should take of it,



and eat and live *for ever*. What else is this? What idea can it afford, but that of a state of immortality lately within his reach, and forfeited by a crime? And what idea more natural, what hope more soothing, than that of regaining what had thus been lost? In Genesis, V. v. 24. it is said, "Enoch walked with God, and was not, *for God took him.*" In Gen. XLVII. v. 9. Jacob says, "the days of *my pilgrimage,*" יַמֵּי סֻמְרִי, which is as justly as it is naturally explained by St. Paul, of the looking to a better city, whose builder and maker is God. In Exodus XXXII. v. 32, 35. Moses prays thus: "Blot me not out of *the book that thou hast written.* And the Lord said "unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned "against me, him will I blot out of my "book.—In the day when I visit, I will "visit their sin upon them; and the Lord "plagued the people." In Numbers, XXIII. v. 10. Balaam says, "Let me die the death "of the righteous, and let my latter end "be like his." And in ver. 17, "I *shall* "see him, but *not now*; I *shall behold* him, "but *not nigh*; there shall come a star out "of Jacob," &c. In Deuteronomy, XI. v. 21,

the Jews were exhorted to obey the law, that their days may be multiplied “as the “ days of heaven upon earth.”

From the instance of Enoch, the belief that man may live in a future state is clearly deducible.

From the next, that there is a record which does not belong to this life, but to a future state of happiness.

From that of Balaam, that the death of the righteous is a happy one, which it can be only as the means of attaining to a happier state; an interpretation confirmed by the subsequent quotation, wherein a future state is the only possible allusion. The prophet declares, that his seeing of the Messiah was not a period at hand; he looks forward to a distant one, as a scene of splendor; and with this view, how desirable was the death of the righteous, and a *future state* like his. Aharith, rendered in our version the *latter end*, is properly a *future state of a thing*. *Proprié subsequutio, status rei posterioris sive postremæ.* (Simonis

ad verbum.) And this idea seems to me to be confirmed by the use of the same expression in the song of Moses: *Oh, that my people were wise; that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end!* A consideration surely weak to those who did not believe a future state, but one which, with this reference, is most awful.

And from the last quotation it is a plain inference, that there is in heaven a state of superior happiness to that upon earth.

As to the passage which you quote from Ecclesiastes, chap. III. v. 18. (note 78, p. 376) you quote the *objection* and not the *answer*; the words of one at a loss for the means of real happiness, introduced as an enquirer. The answer of Solomon, and his opinion, determines in the last verse of the book, which, as you have consulted, I will beg leave to recommend to your most serious consideration; and you may possibly find that Solomon did not treat the immortality of the soul as a fable. "God," says he, "shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be



“ good, or whether it be evil.” This most assuredly is not done in this life; it must then refer to another.

To these may be added the expression, that for such offences as implied a desertion of the true God, *that soul shall be cut off from among his people*; an expression which seems directly to refer to a future state, since it denotes not a public calamity but a particular penalty, and not of a temporal, at least not a judicial nature of human infliction.

That the tabernacle and its ornaments were symbolical, the most learned of the Jews have asserted, and it would not be easy to account for its structure, &c. in any other way. But thus nothing can more aptly figure a future state, beyond the term of common life, than the sanctuary separated by the veil. Much might be enlarged on this head, but this is enough to shew that Moses had not only an idea, but a rational and sublime one, of a future state.

There is a doctrine mentioned in the Talmud, which may also be assigned as a reason why Moses has not mentioned the future state more expressly, and that is, that the Jews hold all their nation, who do not reject the true God to be *Goi kadosh, an holy nation*, and predestinated finally to an inheritance in it, a doctrine certainly countenanced by the expression of *being cut off from his people* above mentioned. Buxtorf Syn. Ind. Cap. 1. And this notion is strengthened by the Jerusalem Targum's interpretation of Abraham's Vision, Gen. XV. v. 17, in which the *smoking furnace* is explained to be a vision or emblem of hell. I know not how *all the families of the earth* could possibly *be blessed in Abraham*, Gen. XII. v. 3, but *in a future life*.

The Mosaic account of the fall is indeed concise, but it is consistent. You yourself allow Moses to have existed 400 years before Zoroaster, and till you can prove the Zendavesta to be older than the Pentateuch, your arguments will only shew that Zoroaster did, (what has alwas been done with a simple tradition) work it up into a

fabulous history, in order to draw attention. It was thus the Greeks did with their traditions, and thus the Hindus did with the original veds, and the papists with the gospel, loading the simplicity of the original with barbarous decorations, in order to astonish and gratify that love of the marvellous and idle fancy which the weak and the ignorant are alike seduced by. To simplify a history (and especially a doctrine) is scarcely in the progress of human science or the human mind at an early period. Even fables must be founded on received facts and received principles, and where the early history was short and simple, it naturally followed that some would endeavour to perpetuate the tradition, by the most powerful means and most lasting records, to imprint the revelations of God on the sublimest of his works, and to write in the characters of the firmament, the records of the dispensation of the author of all. Hence then one is not surprised to find the tradition of the fall pervade the theology of the East, from the Euphrates to the Ganges, that the promise made to our common mother in her virgin



state, and in the bloom of paradise, that her\* seed should bruise the serpent's head, should be impressed on the sphere, or that since the tradition had declared that man was made in the image of his creator, and that the creator had appeared to man, that the incarnations of Vishnou should be engrafted on it, as a comment, and even a complement to the original.

\* In this observation, I find myself in some degree anticipated by Luther. Fortasse enim, ut promissum semen (non viri, sed) mulieris hoc modo occulto prædiceretur, virginis absque viro filius. Geier de Messicæ Morte, &c. p. 294. Ed. Franc ad Mœnum, 1691. *Perhaps the promised seed, not of the man but of the woman, was thus obscurely predicted as the son of a pure virgin.* From this observation alone, we can account for the monuments of the tradition, wherever they are found, for the exposition is a natural one. The prophecy of Isaiah seems to me to be both a confirmation and explication of the original promise, and the subsequent one to the house of David, (then in danger,) and its intent, to be this: *The Virgin shall bring forth a son, (the promised Messiah) and as a sign that she shall do so, before a child can know good from evil, they who endeavour to defeat the promise, shall be destroyed.* The sign was fulfilled in Rahor, Shubal, Hashban, and that Jeremiah expected the completion of the prophecy, is I think certain. See Jeremiah, chap. XXXI. v. 22.

Astronomy appears to have been one great means both of recording and confusing history. It has been studied at a very early period, and seems to have attained to a certain degree of perfection, before the dispersion from\* Babel; if it was not more properly a science preserved by Noah from the time before the deluge. With the manners of mankind, however the science itself was, I presume, corrupted, and the sun being made the representative of the deity or the deity himself, the original history was applied to him, and

\* There is a curious record of this dispersion in the Hindu images of *Seeva*, the destroyer, which is mentioned by Mr. Burrow. It is the inference he makes, and a just one, from the very peculiar circumstance that the pagodas "of the Carnatic, and the round towers of Ireland, are either complete or *truncated* pyramids, meant for images of *Seeva*." One of them he describes as having been originally a *cylinder upon the frustum of a cone, and of bricks*. As Kes. Vol. 2, p. 477. Ed. 8vo. Mr. Bruce calls the *caaba* of Mecca a *round tower*. Vol. 1, p. 511. If so, probably it was of the same origin. Mr. Burrow refers the round towers of Ireland to the same origin with the pagodas of the Carnatic, and I believe justly.

blended with such symbolical representations as marked his course. You will observe, Sir, I do not here contend for the later doctrines of the Rabbies, but merely for the Mosaic history. Had there been no reference to such a history, what, Sir, would you then have said? You would with reason have urged a want of collateral evidence. Had that which you allow to be subsequent been more simple, you would have said the other was formed upon it; as it is the tradition on which the future hopes of mankind dwelt, and do dwell, is transmitted through various channels, sometimes obscure, sometimes confused, but still discernible in all. Moses was skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians; what their system was, is pretty well known. How then came he not to introduce that learning into his system? How comes it, that we have neither Mnevis, nor Apis, nor Osiris, that we have none of the astronomical or mystic systems; that the only trace remaining is the worship of the golden calf, in the absence and supposed loss of Moses, a trace, which as I hope to shew, is an evidence of the truth of his



chronology. How comes it, that in the successive discoveries of three thousand years in natural Philosophy, there should have been not only nothing found out to contradict the Mosaic account, but that, on the contrary, it has been continually more and more confirmed by the evidence of facts. Whence is all this so? I know no answer but one, a better source of information\*.

Perhaps, Sir, you have unintentionally supported the very history you oppose. You have shewn the tradition to be general of the creation in six periods, which whether *days* or *gabans*, identifies the origin.

In the objections of the Bramins, there is so much to confirm the Mosaic history, that it may cause a suspicion, that it was rather to avoid an omission so immediately observable, that they are introduced. You do not, I suppose, Sir, mean to infer

\* Mr. John Hunter's conviction, that the expression, *the blood is the life*, is proved by his investigations to be agreeable to the fact, may serve as an instance.

an absurdity of the allegorical representation. You say in your 31st note, "I have sometimes asked myself what would be the loss to the human race if a new Omar condemned them, (the sacred books of the Hindoos) to the flames." It would, Sir, deprive mankind of some of the most authentic records of the kind, most decisively confirming the Mosaic account, and that particularly in the date of the origin of real history, the beginning of the Kali Yug, which is almost precisely the time of the deluge recorded by Moses, according to the septuagint. As to their representation of the deity as a *round* being, it is not their idea. They do not mean to represent his person, but his perfection, by such an image. The very words of the Shastah, as given by Mr. Holwell in his memoir relative to Bengal, are these: "God is one creator of all; that is, God is *like* a perfect sphere, without beginning or end." There is a pleasure in the investigation of truth, but really, Sir, there is very little in the discovery of error of any kind, much less such as this, where the reference is out of the reach of so many. The error is of a

nature that tends to destroy literary confidence, and one that no excellence can atone for, I have a right to complain of its frequency in your book. Of the Hindu system, I shall speak hereafter in its proper place, in answer to what you urge as their system, in the series of theological institutions.

From the declamation of your Lama of Thibet, little more is to be derived than that the same tradition prevailed in that country, also interwoven with, or loaded by fable. It is indeed observed by him, that the religion of Bedou or Fôt prevailed originally in the western world. This, I believe, is true, if by the western world is meant the west of Asia, and that from hence it spread over a great part of Europe; as well as Asia. Your Lama's account of the birth of Fôt is merely a childish application of the Mosaic history of the formation of Eve, and the very name of a perfect being, (a Samœan) at once betrays its origin in the Hebrew word Shamaim, the heavens or *sama* he *was on high*. The derivation you acknowledge, the inference



will support itself. It probably came to signify man of the woods, merely from the supposed superior sanctity of the life of an Hermit, nay, even the very name of the Siamese Deity, Sommona Codom, is clearly the Sammœan or perfect being of Codom or Cadem, (Heb. *Antiquity*) a name the Siamese cannot explain. This history they acknowledge is not of their own country originally; La Loubere says, they had it from Ceylon, from whence they say their religious doctrines were brought; and it is confessed of Fo, in China, not only that he came from the west, but what is very remarkable, “This Idol” (Fo) says father Le Compte, “was brought from the Indies, “(to China) *two and thirty years* after the “death of Jesus Christ.” He then says, “Nobody can well tell where this idol *Fo* “was born, (I call him an idol and not a “man, because some think it was an apparition from hell;) those who with more “likelihood say he was a man, make him “born above a thousand years before Jesus “Christ, in a kingdom of the Indies, near “the line. His mother, who brought him “into the world through her right side,

“ died in childbirth; at seventeen he mar-  
 “ ried, and had a son; at thirty he was on  
 “ a sudden possessed, and as it were filled  
 “ with the divinity. He died at seventy-  
 “ nine years of age, and at his death  
 “ declared to his followers, “ that all he  
 “ had hitherto told them was enigmatical,  
 “ and they would be mistaken if they  
 “ thought there was any other first prin-  
 “ ciple of all things beside nothing.” P.  
 325, Edit. Lond. 1697. Such is the his-  
 tory which your Lama has in part detailed,  
 and in which the fatal discovery made at  
 his death, as well as the time of the appear-  
 ance of his doctrines in China, are proofs  
 of a subsequent imposture, interwoven with  
 the original tradition of the Hindus.\* It

\* This is not merely conjecture. “ This Fo,” says  
 Du Halde, “ speaks in one of his books, of a master  
 more ancient than himself, called by the Chinese *Omi*  
*to*, whom the Japanese, by corruption of language,  
 have termed *amida*; it was in the kingdom of *Bengal*  
 that this other monster appeared.” P. 38, Vol. 3.  
 This *omi to* is originally *amita*, and signifies *immensu-*  
*rable* (As Res. Vol. 2, Ed. 8, p. 374) and it is the  
 sacred name of the *Hindoo* deity *Buddha* or *Bedou*, and  
 confirms the position. The Siamese says, Loubere had

is much to the credit of the Missionaries, that they were extremely cautious in making any suppositions as to the traits of gospel history perceptible in that of Fôt; but, Sir, with an idea the very reverse of your Lamas, I am persuaded, that the supposition would have been just. That somewhat of this kind had been deduced from the Mosaic history or original tradition, I have shewn above. But there were also other means of propagating a later and more full specification of the doctrine of the Messiah. The prophesy of Isaiah had been published before the Babylonish Captivity, and it is an incontrovertible fact, that the Jews had gone to India, and even to China, at a very early period, when a prophecy of such a nature carried with them, could not fail to make an impression. Some of their decendants existed there not long ago.

There are then two periods in which the notion of the Messiah was carried to the

an elder God than Sommona Codom. His name was Tevetat. This is the debtah or dewtah, a general name of spirits among the Hindus.



Eastern nations, (exclusive of that which was carried after the flood) the first after the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes, the second by the teachers of the gospel. There are also two periods respecting the religion of Sommona Codom, in which it is said to have been propagated in Siam; the first is that of his death 544 years before Christ, the second 65 years after Christ; two periods coinciding so closely as to give a moral certainty of the fact. See Modern Univ. Hist. Vol. 3, p. 342. The king of Siam also told the Ambassador of Lewis 14th, in the year 1685, that his religion had been that of his kingdom for 2229 years, which is 544 years before the christian æra. (*Hist. du Voyage de Siam, par le Pere Tachard,*) p. 544.

Father Ricci, when he was on his mission, saw one of the dispersion, who informed him that he was an Israelite, and not a Jew, (*Renaudot's note, on the discovery of Jews in China, Ancient accounts of India, and China, p. 183, appendix*) Jews were there in the ninth century, (*ibid.*) and still in India there is an ancient colony of

them, called Afghans (As Res. vol. 2, p. 76.) Another source of the doctrine was Christianity itself, preached by one of the Apostles, at least (St. Thomas) in India. In the 2d Epistle of St. Peter, which was addressed to the Eastern churches; the transfiguration is expressly mentioned, and a part of the fable of Sommona Codom, that is, his having always two attendants, one of whom intreated him to quench the fire of Hell, is probably an allusion to Moses and Elias, the former of whom always supplicated for pardon of the Israelites, and another allusion, or rather corrupt tradition, is a corruption of Maha Maya, the name of Buddha's mother, that is, the name of the mother of Sommona Codom, which they have changed into Maha Maria, or Mania, the great Mary.

Loubere mentions that Sommona Codom is said to have died for having eaten pig's flesh, having slain a person whose soul was in that pig; he mentions also *Prâ Narotte*, who is to be a new Sommona Codom, and is to come as a new, perfect man, when he is to give himself to be eaten by the Talapoins. It was observed

to me, by a very ingenious and learned friend, to whom I shewed the passage, that *Narotte* seemed a corruption of *Nazareth*, and it seems to me to appear very plainly that *Pra Narotte* is *Jesus of Nazareth*, and still more so, that the circumstance of Sommona Codom, giving his own eyes and his wife and children *to be eaten*, is a corrupted idea of the Holy Sacrament, of eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ. Let it be observed, that, the Bali books are without date or name. Modern Universal History, vol. 3, p. 342, 3, and Loubere, edit. Amst. 1691.

Thus far, then, I am willing to concur with you, that there is a resemblance between the Gospel history, and that of the Indian and Chinese Deity, and though to common sense I might leave the plain question, which is to be received as the original, that system whose origin is obscure, and whose doctrines are a mass of absurd fables, held forth avowedly on atheistic principles, or, that which is a simple history leading to a sincere worship of the Deity; I will not quit it so: you yourself, Sir,



are obliged to give up all hopes of advantage from your own statement, since you bring back the origin of all the Asiatic religions to Egypt. Indeed the history is so decided in its reference to the\* West in Loubere, le Compte and Du Halde, as to leave no room for a doubt on the subject, and be it observed that the expiation of sins, by a Saviour of the world, from the West, is still the great doctrine of the several sects of Fôt; that is, their *exterior* doctrine. The *interior* is rank atheism, and therefore there could have been no scruple in borrowing sufficient to ground a convenient fable upon. Of such an application we have instances nearer home, in the miracles of Apollonius, and later still in the Koran of Mahomet. The progress of the human mind is every where alike. Simplicity may serve as a basis for fraud to build upon, but it never in itself

\* Add to this what is related in the history of *Fo*, wherein it is asserted, that somewhere in the *West* there is a kingdom of pure innocence; and the Prince, who is heir to the crown, is *Fo* himself. Discourse of a Chinese Philosopher, Du Halde, P. 279, Vol. 3, Edit. 8vo, London, 1741.

serves its purpose; finally, this basis is eternally discernible; however truth and falsehood be blended, they will never unite so closely, but that on a just trial they will be easily separable, and in this whole history, such does the groundwork of the fable appear to me, that if duly weighed and represented by a missionary, it must have effect.

Thus, Sir, your theory has travelled over the Indies and Tartary, seeking rest, and it has found none, and conscious, as it were, of the weakness of it, your Lamas (that is *you*, Sir) exclaim, demonstrate to us the existence of Jesus, by historical monuments of *so remote* a period as those we have adduced. The demand is equivocal, since the Christian asserts his existence as man, and his pre-existence; and as expressed it is absurd, because the mere existence at a particular or any period, unless combined with other circumstances, is no argument either of truth or falsehood. By your note the question seems to be limited to the time of his existence as man; and, if so, the question is, did he truly so exist at the

time expressed by the Gospels. The second part of the question depends on the truth of the Gospel history, and if the latter be proved it necessarily follows. I shall therefore for the present confine myself to the first part, as here stated, of your demand, premising thus far, that it having been so often and so well answered, one might have been surprised at its being brought forward again, even by an adversary. There is something new, at least to me, in your objections, and the names alone of *Mythriæes*, *Essenians*, and *Sammæans*, &c. are certainly very impressive, but notwithstanding this terrific array, it is not necessary to be apprehensive, and if their pretensions are, as I hope to prove, as little founded as the first position to be examined, they will serve only to confirm what they were marshalled to oppose. You assert, Sir, that "There are absolutely no other monuments of the existence of Jesus Christ, as a human being, than a passage in Josephus, a single phrase in Tacitus, and the Gospels." (Note 37.) This, Sir, is not true. There is another passage in Suetonius, lib. 5, cap. 25, another in



Pliny's letter to Trajan, besides the *twenty-one* Epistles of the Apostles, and all the passages on the subject in the works of the fathers of the first century, where they abound, and the Jewish Talmud, (see Grotius, on the truth of Christianity, lib. 2, chap. 5,) and yet, Sir, you dare to say there are absolutely no other. The testimony of Julian you will not surely contest, for though not so early as the others, no one had a better opportunity or power of enquiring into the fact, and exposing it, or a greater wish to do it.

The passage in Josephus, you say, is unanimously acknowledged to be apocryphal. This passage has certainly been controverted, and it seems to me scarcely possible to assign a reason for controverting it, but the clearness of his testimony. There is no Greek copy known in which it is not, the context is imperfect without it, and it has some time ago been so strongly proved\* to be authentic, as to leave, I think, no farther room for doubt upon the subject. And what do you

\* By my most venerable and learned friend, Mr. Bryant, in his *Vindiciæ Flavianæ*.

alledge against all these? A sectary of the third century: and what does he say? "All the world knows that the Gospels were neither written by Jesus Christ nor his Apostles." Here then, though he asserts one falsehood, he admits what you contend against, viz. *the existence of Jesus Christ as man*. The Gospels were not indeed written by him, but that two of them were by his Apostles; *all the world*, if I may repeat so silly an expression, is so far from knowing, that it knows the reverse to be the fact attested by the fathers of the preceding centuries, as may be seen in Grotius, and Burnet, and other writers on the subject.

Shall I say, Sir, you was ignorant of these circumstances? if so, what credit is to be given to your acquaintance with the subject, and if I am not to say you are ignorant of them, what credit\* is to be given to your assertions?

\* This mode of assertion is not, however, without example, it was the mode laid down and practised by the Jesuits, as may be seen in the 15th of the provincial letters. It might perhaps be worth enquiring into, whether the French revolution be not the sequel of

their well known system and plan of universal government, carried on by the same body, under a different denomination, with the advantage of a new principle? the case mentioned by Pascal is so much in point, that I present it to the reader. *About twelve years ago, says this author to the Jesuits, you were reproached with this maxim of Father Bauny, that it is allowable to seek a proximate occasion of sin, directly primo et per se, for the spiritual or temporal good of one's neighbour. What did Father Coussin reply in 1664, in his apology, p. 128? "Examine the passage, "read the page, the margin, preface, sequel, and all the rest, "nay all the book, not a single vestige of this opinion will "be found;" and yet the quotation is strictly just.*



## LETTER IX.

SIR,

*THE Heavens declare the glory of God*, says the pious Psalmist. You say, Sir, they declare no such thing; and yet you are obliged to admit that religious ideas are derived from them. It is, Sir, a hard contest, when the light of truth forces itself on a mind determined to resist it. In every line the struggles of your argument appear to be the efforts of an exhausted adversary. What else can they be, when in the face of all history you assert religion to have been imposed by *force and authority*? (p. 219,) when in contradiction to common prudence you tell us, that “from remarking the various “and opposite creeds, we are led boldly to “reject the infallibility claimed by *each*,” instead of what that prudence surely would direct, which is to *examine the claim*, and *allow it* where it shall be found to be *due*; as in all the claims of all the systems in

every other department of human knowledge.

Should an empiric harangue his mob on the deleterious effects of animal and vegetable food, and prescribing his *Balsams of Health*, exclaim, that from the various and opposite effects of the common means of nouriture, we are led boldly to *reject* them *all*; why, Sir, the most ignorant of his auditors would teach them better; he would tell them to try them first; take what was good, the best in preference; use them so far as they might profit him, and reject all that was noxious. It is not difficult to invent theories when the facts are not to be too strictly regarded, or to give a sentence the form of a maxim when the universality of its application is referred to the occasional expediency, and not to the experimental truth.

From the former reference general maxims are become general evils, since they are weapons every one may fence with, though they never carry their thrust home. You tell us, Sir, there is a great principle,

by which the reference of the origin of religious knowledge to inspiration is still more victoriously refuted than by your preceding theory, (*that the idea of God is merely that of the powers of nature: Quere, by the bye, who is this nature?*) and this victorious principle is, "that man receives no ideas but through the medium of his senses," (p. 224). This great principle, which is to be so victorious, was many years ago shewn to be false\* by Mr. Locke. No idea of *thinking* or *willing* is derived from any of the *senses*. We transfer the *names* of the ideas of sense to those of the acts

\* The pious and subtle Berkeley went so far as to deny all material existence, and consequently all reception of ideas through the senses as a medium. But it was by entangling himself in a sophism. *What we perceive is an idea.* It is true, that in that which Mr. Locke denominates an idea of sensation, we do perceive an idea; but we do not, that I can find, perceive *the* IDEA, till the IMPRESSION from the external cause CEASES. The original perception is not the image or representation, but of the original, and is in the organ of sense, not in the mind. The *idea* is merely a *partial perception*; or only *one* of *two concomitant perceptions*. 1. The perception of somewhat external, which is an archetype; and, 2. The image in the mind upon reflection.



of the mind ; but the ideas themselves are perfectly distinct. By which of the senses do we judge of the truth or falsehood of an argument? But supposing the principle to be true, which it is not, it is nothing to the purpose, since a revelation may be, perhaps must be conveyed by the senses; and if it has been experienced by voice or vision, all your argument falls to the ground. Whether it has or not, is the only question still ; history asserts the fact, and you have not advanced any thing to invalidate it, as far as I can perceive. In your 42d note you observe, that “ the rock on which all the  
 “ ancients have split, and which has occasioned all their errors, has been their  
 “ supposing the idea of God to be innate  
 “ and co-eternal with the soul.” I have heard of a *shipwreck of the faith*, but this is the first I have heard of the *shipwreck of infidelity*. This rock, however, is not, unfortunately for the argument, so dangerous as here represented. Mr. Locke has demolished it entirely ; and what you may think strange, Sir, was still a believer and a Christian. But he has proved, and you will not be able to disprove or refute it,

that when the human mind reflects at all upon the subject, the existence of a God is a truth demonstrable and demonstrated; whose demonstration the mind cannot negative. The error is merely in *the term* INNATE; it is more nearly *connate*, that is, *conformable to the original constitution of the human intellect*.

One term prevails with a malignant influence through all your speculations on the subject; I say, *one term*, and repeat it, because it is the *name*, and a *name* with an indefinite idea annexed to it, and that is, *despotic*. This, Sir, is the grand spectre of your system, though, like all others, it *ought* to alarm none but childish apprehensions. To minds of manly growth, when applied to the Author of all, it is as just as it is truly sublime. A God not absolute in power, as he is perfect in wisdom, would be an absurdity——

“ So” Newton “ thought, think better if you can.”

Is a *despotic* power necessarily an *irrational* one? You would confound both. If in your own mind they are confounded—the more is the pity. When in the close of the

greatest exertion of mere human intellect, in which the laws of nature are investigated with a penetration, and demonstrated with a precision unrivalled, the author of the stupendous work is found ascribing glory and dominion despotic to the acknowledged Creator; and when it is known to be an admitted fact, that he never pronounced his name without testifying his reverence; and when again it is treated by another with levity, and shoved aside by frivolous, or worse than frivolous argument; the difference will not suggest in favour of the latter.

Presuming upon a want of authenticity in the Old and New Testament, you have done what any one upon a similar presumption might do, formed a system of your own, which depends upon no records, and has no authenticity; I say, depends upon *no records*, since there are none which assert the fact. The only testimonies are arguments from the ignorance of the philosophers who suggested hypotheses for what their situation rendered them incapable of determining. The Grecian mythology, and even that of Egypt, as to the



little known of it, has given rise to ingenious speculations, but there they rest; for no allegorical explanation of a fable can substantiate a fact without other evidence, much less in opposition to positive and rational evidence, such as the Holy Scriptures present. What you *suppose* then, though no one else is under any necessity of assenting to it farther than the collateral evidence will establish, (for I will not follow your example so far as to *reject* ALL, because I have found so much contradiction) ought to be considered; and in this there is matter of much weight *conceded*.

It is granted, that “ man, considering only  
 “ the action of the elements upon him,  
 “ inferred, relatively to himself, an idea  
 “ of weakness, and, relatively to them, (it  
 “ should be their author) an idea of power,  
 “ of dominion; and this idea was the primitive and fundamental type of all his  
 “ conceptions of the divinity,” p. 227. To him who had no other source of information, it would have been, with the correction inserted, a just and true one——

“ That there’s a power above us,  
 “ Nature proclaims aloud through all her works.”

But where, Sir, have you found the *elements* supposed to be the *Deity*? Gods of the elements abound, powers guiding and directing them, and in a peculiar manner presiding over them, or residing in them; but the conception of the elements being powers in themselves, is scarcely worthy of your ideal savage state. It is scarcely, if at all, in nature, and is, I believe, unnatural. What object is there in nature which affords the idea of the origination of action or of motion? None but animated beings: the rest shew even to the most simple understanding an effect only for which the ignorant imagined a peculiar cause more potent than themselves, and as such revered it.

You say, Sir, that “ *judging by comparison,*  
 “ and remarking in those beings a motion  
 “ spontaneous like his own, he supposed  
 “ there to be a *will*, an *intelligence* in that  
 “ *motion*, of a nature similar to what ex-  
 “ isted in himself.” How a *will*, or an  
*intelligence* can exist in a *motion*, how a  
*cause* can exist in the *effect*, is not very  
 intelligible; it is supposing an impossibility.

If the sentence has any meaning, it is this: that man, feeling an intelligence, the cause and arbiter of his own motions, ascribed a similar cause to other beings whose motions appeared to be spontaneous, and the religious sentiments were just; the error was only in the *object*. This, Sir, I agree with you, was a *fatal* error; but I deny it to have had its existence in the first age of mankind. It is, indeed, necessary to your system, that the sun and moon should have been the first objects of adoration. But Moses will tell you that GOD was the first object of worship; the Hindu will tell you it was Brum, or Brama; and even the Greek mythology will give you prior deities. The great point is admitted here also, that the contemplation of the physical world impresses on the mind the belief of a God even *in the infancy of reason*\*. It was the same contemplation, and the same mode of

\* If so, how much superior was the infancy of reason to the wisdom of the modern wise men. Men in the former state argued by analogy, and inferred similar causes for similar effects. Our wise ones argue from effects to no cause at all. They can see no design



comparison, that has perpetuated it to the maturity of reason in the profoundest and most sublime of human minds; and if now at length a few have wished to prevent its use, it can only give ground to suspect, that as in other cases, there may also be a *dotage of reason*. When, therefore, you represent religion as “an arbitrary idea, “without influence on the mutual relations “existing between men,” (p. 231) “as “being but a vain homage paid to the “visible powers of nature,” (ibid.) you do but evade the conclusion by a sophism in the premises. You ask theologians if such be not the unanimous record of all the

in the formation of animals; they can stumble, indeed, upon a *suspicion*, but they will shut their eyes, and cry it is all darkness to the meridian sun. If ever there was an instance of perverse resistance to the truth, and determined scepticism, the following is one:—“After “a consideration of the singular adaptation of the camel “to the territory he inhabits, we are *tempted* to affirm” (says the author) “the nature of the one has been adapted “to that of the other by some *disposing intelligence*.” Volney, Travels in Syria, vol. i. p. 388, edit. Lond. 1787.

records of antiquity? Their answer is, No; no, Sir, no such thing. They will answer, that the best and the only authenticated records of antiquity most decisively contradict it, and produce them to your confusion. They will ask you what are *your* records? “It *results*,” says *Plutarch*, “from the verses of Orpheus, and the “sacred books of the Egyptians;” that is, the inference of a writer, so late as the time of Trajan, from books of a nation, which between the time of Herodotus and that of Diodorus Siculus, had, as Sir Isaac Newton observes, manifestly corrupted its history, (Chron. p. 243 and 264.) Besides, Sir, how far was either Plutarch, or Orpheus, or any of the philosophers, a judge of the fact? As far as their knowledge extended, their opinion may be respectable; but what does it amount to? Fragments of an uncertain mythology, or the suggestions of men who wished to account for what they did not know, by effects of their own imagination. Precious records these; and with the utter exclusion of the Mosaic history, the *unanimous* one, and of *all* antiquity!

In your following section, (p. 231), though short, what is advanced is of no small importance. It is admitted, that the study of astronomy has given rise to a peculiar mythology; but as every mythology *must borrow its signs and terms*, and have some grounds for the application, there is a question of magnitude to decide upon, viz. Whence were the signs and terms of astronomy taken originally?

That some knowledge of astronomy was necessary for agriculture in most countries, is true; but it was by no means necessary for Egypt on this account; for there the subsiding of the Nile is all that is necessary; immediately after which the seed is sown, (Herodotus in Euterpe): no country has so little trouble in agriculture. In other countries, for this purpose, were it the only one, a very limited knowledge might have sufficed. If there had not been some occasions for which a more accurate knowledge was necessary, little would probably have been known. The *times* of the overflowings of the Nile, the Euphrates, or the Ganges, are not so important



as the *height* to which they rise ; when, therefore, the *minutest divisions* of time were sought for, if not out of curiosity, it was more likely to have arisen out of some greater necessity, such as a religious observance, navigation, or travelling over a desert. Under the former of these causes we may class astrology, that foolish sister\* of a most sublime science.

The science of astronomy has been referred for its origin to Chaldea, to Egypt, and to India. The claims of the latter are, as it will appear hereafter, no way sufficiently founded ; on the contrary, they must be given up to one or the other of Chaldea or Egypt. Of these, if either has a just claim, which I believe neither has, I should certainly be inclined to give the preference to the former. That the language of the persons who originally drew the figures of the constellations was the Hebrew, I trust I shall prove beyond all controversy ; but as this will not sufficiently determine the

\* It is really a disgrace to Britain, that in these days a species of swindling, under the name of astrology, should be still suffered.

question, some other criterion must be sought for. If such a degree of knowledge of the science, as is indicated by an investigation of the *minutest divisions* of time, would be satisfactory, the place where they would be found to have been in use from a very early period, would be, perhaps, the very place the least of all favourable to your system, that is, in the works of the Jewish astronomers, wherein the very expression is in use, רגעים, Regangim, as are also astronomical calculations of such a subtle and accurate form, that Beveridge\* declares his astonishment at the discovery; and one of the best astronomers † of the present century has declared to me his opinion, that

\* Hæc autem est quam subtilissima anni forma, atque adeo ingeniosa & acuta ut satis mirari nequeo, quo tandem fato, Judæis hominibus, uti quispiam arbitretur, ad tanta non natis in mentem unquam subiit.

Bev. Inst. Chron. lib. I. cap. xiv.

† The late Dr. Ussher, professor of astronomy, in Trinity-college, Dublin, by whose early and lamented death the world lost much information in astronomy, and the writer hereof a most dear and sincere friend. The greatest part of a large treatise of his on this science having been lost at sea; the learned author, whilst labouring hard to replace it, and engaged in obser-

the Chaldean derived much, if not all of what they know of astronomy, from the Jews; an intimation which, as I had it to regret that it went no farther, first induced me to examine the subject in that point of view. That the Jews had astronomers so early as the time of David at least, appears from 1 Chron. chap. XII. v. 32. where it is said, that “the children of Issachar\* were men that had *understand-*  
*ing of the times*, to know what Israel ought to do.” Now as Solomon reigned about forty years, and the argonautic expedition, whatever that was, is fixed by Sir Isaac Newton to have been about forty-three years after the death of Solomon,

was suddenly taken away. His introduction of the use of the circle, instead of the quadrant, in observations, his method of illuminating the wires of the transit instrument by a perforation of the axis, and his plan of the Dublin Observatory, will ever be testimonies of his genius, and the precision and boldness of his ideas.

\* *The men of Zabulon* are said, in the Song of Deborah, to have been men that *handled the pen of the writer*; but nothing can be inferred from this. Judges ch. V. v. 14. Or from Kiriath Sepher, the *city of the writer*; afterwards named Debir, *the Oracle*. Josh. ch. XV. v. 15.



there must have been these men *who had understanding of the times* among the Jews eighty-three years before that expedition.

It seems most probable that both the motives above-mentioned contributed at a very early period to the study of astronomy; viz. religion and navigation. Among the Jews it was absolutely necessary, from the time of Moses, to be able to determine the equinox\*, in order to observe the Pass-

\* It is observed by Reland, that when the *bread of faces* (shew-bread) was arranged six and six on their table, they exactly fitted it. (*Antiquitates Sacrae*, Pars I. § 15.) Were these *faces* hieroglyphic signs of the zodiac? Were the Urim and Thummim (*lights and perfections*) representations of cycles? I believe they were, and perhaps such as they now use in Hindostan. The word *Thummim* signifies perfections or completions, and particularly of the year; see Gen. ch. XLVII. v. 18. but of this I shall have more to say hereafter. Clemens Alexandrinus thought the breast-plate represented the zodiac, and that the whole of the sanctuary had a relation to astronomy. Some of his ideas appear, indeed, rather fanciful. One thing, however, ought not to be omitted; he says the number of bells on the border of the high priest's robe was 366, the number of days in the bissextile year. Strom. lib. 5. And in the first book, he says, that Megasthenes, who was contemporary with Seleucus Nicanor, writes thus: "What-

over, but of the means of determining it the books of Moses give no information. Maimonides says, "That much of the learning of the Jews was never committed to writing;" More Nev. Par. I. cap. 71. And if so, much must have been lost in the captivity and the dispersion. A method of finding the time of the equinox, probably theirs, and some few other circumstances, still remain; but not enough to ascertain whether the science originated with the Jews. The earliest observations of the Chaldeans and Egyptians remaining on record go very little, if at all, farther back than the time of the captivity; for as to those said to have been brought into Greece by Callisthenes, nothing is known of them: and hence it might be doubted whether in the plunder of the temple the Chaldeans did not acquire the means (perhaps books and instruments) of astronomical knowledge to which their cele-

"ever has been said by the ancients (Greeks) of nature,  
 "has been said by philosophers of other countries out  
 "of Greece, partly by the Brahmins in India, partly  
 "by those who are called Jews in Syria." I quote this from a translation, not having the original by me.

brity was originally indebted; and not only they, but perhaps the Egyptians, when they plundered it in the time of Rehoboam. The mere notice of *Cimah*, *Cesil*, *Mazza-roth*, and *Aish*\*, in Job, (chap. XXXVIII.) amounts to nothing more than that a few constellations were known to his, as they are to almost every other country. Having premised thus far, I come now to your assertion, which is so strong both as to the epoch and place of the birth of astro-

\* In our translation of the Bible, *Cimah* is rendered the *Pleiades*; *Cesil*, *Orion*; and *Aish*, *Arcturus*; the true meanings of the original names are, however, by no means certain. I mention it, because that Mr. Paine, mistaking the translation for the original names, has endeavoured to raise an objection to the antiquity of the book of Job upon his own error. It is not impossible that the name *Cesil*, which is generally supposed to mean *Orion*, and which also signifies *a fool*, and particularly *a lazy fool*, gave rise to the custom of *April fools*. This constellation did set heliacally in the month of April, when the equinoctial intersection was in the middle of Aries; and it is so long from the heliacal setting of the first to that of the last star of this great constellation, that the idea of sluggishness is not ill applied to it. That Huli fools in India, as April fools with us, are made at the same time, is now well known.



nomy. "Of this epoch," you say, Sir,  
 "supported by the authority of the monu-  
 "ments of astronomy itself, that its prin-  
 "ciples can be traced back *with certainty*  
 "to a period of nearly seventeen thousand  
 "years!" (p. 235.) And you refer the  
 reader in your note to the authority of Mr.  
 Dupuis.

It is now many years since I first saw  
 the work you refer to, and I remember  
 perfectly well that the position surprised me.  
 But a surprise is no reason for throwing  
 away the Bible, and our hopes of salvation,  
 rashly. We may have some confidence in  
 the many victories the *sword of the spirit,*  
*which is the word of God,* has already  
 obtained; an astronomical calculation may  
 include an error; and Mr. Dupuis has  
 failed a little in his recollection. "Mr.  
 "Dupuis has assigned *many plausible reasons*  
 "to prove that Libra was formerly the sign  
 "of the vernal, and Aries of the nocturnal,  
 "(autumnal it should be) equinox," (note  
 48.) *Plausible reasons*, Sir;—Is that all?  
 How came these *plausible reasons* in the  
*note* to have grown into a certainty in the

*text*, or was the expression inserted in the text in confidence that the note would scarcely be regarded? was it so before as to your records of antiquity? Such shifts must excite the indignation of honest men. Mr. Dupuis's *plausible reasons*, Sir, may be admitted to be, what in the note you durst not assert, certain, and yet they may confirm the Mosaic account. You know, Sir, that the Egyptians were acquainted with the motion of the earth round the sun. Admitting therefore that they made Libra\* the vernal equinox, it was the heliocentric place of the earth; the Sun seen from the earth was at the same time in Aries; and the period of the birth of the system will be by your own account 4,619 years before Christ, to a demonstration.

Mr. Dupuis thought he must transfer the vernal equinox to Libra, to make the signs agree to Egypt, which is begging one

\* Mr. De La Lande, in his *System of Astronomy*, vol. 1, p. 181, and Mr. Bode, of Berlin, in his very ingenious and useful *Introduction to the Knowledge of the starry Heavens*, p. 55, Ed. Berlin, 1788, have both made a similar observation.

question, viz. that it was originally adapted to Egypt,\* and then establishes his chronology on this; which is begging a second question, viz. that there was no other means of reconciling them.

Had Mr. Dupuis however reversed the order of his argument, he would have come nearer to the truth; had he said, *since the constellations, if supposed to have originated in Egypt, will not be applicable to any period of history on record, they did not originate in that country, he might have* been led to seek another country to which they would have been appropriate, at the time usually assigned as that of their being invented. As it is avowedly of great im-

\* Perhaps the admirers of Jachin and Boaz and yourself, Sir, in particular, may be gratified in finding in these words an argument of no less validity than Mr. Dupuis's, from which it appears that Solomon lived at the time Mr. D. fixes for the tracing of the sphere. Jachin Boaz are properly three words, Jachin Bo az; that is, *it will direct to the Goat*, viz. Capricorn; therefore Capricorn *must* have been in the summer solstice in the time of the erection of Solomon's temple, and that as Mr. Dupuis has shewn, was 17,000 years ago. Q. E. D.



portance, let us then examine, Sir, whether from a contemplation of the sphere itself, this question may not be determined.

The oldest delineation of the sphere known is the one described by Eudoxus as the sphere of the ancients, in which the equinoctial colure passed through the middle of Aries, (Newton's Chron. p. 82.) On this sphere, as Capricorn ends in a fish's tail, the indications of wet weather extend from the winter solstice to somewhat beyond the vernal equinox, reckoning from the middle of Capricorn to the greatest right effusion of the Eridanus. *Cetus*, or the *Sea-monster*, whose paws and breast rest in the Eridanus, and whose head is reared eastward towards it, is evidently the symbol of a violent sea, coming from the west, and threatening destruction on the coast, to which the Eridanus belongs; and which, from the site of the constellations, would seem to be a sea west of that river. More westward still are Aquarius and the Southern fish; Aquarius, from the pouring out of the waters evidently, together with the fish, denote a season of

rains from December to the end of March, and from their relative situation this rainy season takes place on the western coast of the sea, denoted by the whale. Compare these circumstances with the Indian ocean, and the navigation of the Red sea, and they will mark a decisive use and reference. For a considerable part of the means of illustration I am indebted to Mr. Bruce's Observations on the coasts of Abyssinia and the Red sea, and especially his singularly ingenious one on the voyages to Ophir. It appears then from his account, that on the coast on the west of the Red sea, and all that part of the eastern coast of the African, which bound the Indian ocean, the rains take place in our six winter months, vol. 1, p. 391. But from an observation made at Dahalac, (page 350) it appears, that especially in the months December, January, and February, there are violent showers for twelve hours at a time, which deluge the island; and it appears also from Niebhur (§ 28, chap 3) that on the opposite coast of Arabia, the rains begin in the middle of February, and end in the middle of April; this is also the time of

the latter rain in Palestine, and the time in which the Jordan overflows his banks; "The Jordan overfloweth his banks all the time of *harvest*." Joshua, chap III. v. 15, that is in the first month, chap. IV. v. 19, or March; so that from Palestine to and along the coasts of the Red sea, and the eastern one of the Indian ocean, the rainy season will agree with the signs. Let us now examine how the Indian ocean will agree with the other constellations of the Whale and the Eridamus.

Mr. Bruce observes, that when the ships sailed from Ezion Geber in April, on their arrival at Mocha they were stopped by the violent tides and swells of the *south-west* monsoon; which is exactly the direction pointed out by the head of the whale. It is also the direction in which a great swell is thrown into the gulph of Ormus, towards the mouth of Euphrates, and also into the mouth of the Indus. Of these I take the former to be intended by the Eridanus. It is said (Gen. chap. II. v. 14) to have been a river of Eden, and the name *Eridanus* or *Eridan* is so nearly *Iôr Eden*, יֵרֵד עֵדֶן that



I conclude, and I think safely, that this was the river intended: and the following tradition powerfully supports the conclusion. “ These (the fishes in the constellation) are “ fabled to be Syrian Deities, according to “ Germanicus, *Syriæ duo numina pisces*, by “ which are understood Venus and Cupid, as “ Hyginus (from the authority of Diognetus “ Erythræus) writes; for Venus and her son “ Cupid coming to the river *Euphrates*, and “ frightened with the sudden appearance of “ the giant *Typhon*, cast themselves into the “ river, and assumed the shapes of *fishes*.— “ But the Scholiast of Germanicus (from “ Nigidius) writes that these were the fishes “ which turned, or rolled up, upon the river “ *Euphrates* a great egg upon which a dove “ sitting hatched Venus, the Syrian Goddess.” (Sherburne’s *Manilius*, p. 22.)

Judging from the disposition of the constellation, the violence of this ocean should be at the highest about the end of March; and it being the time of the change of the Monsoon from north-east to south-west, it is, in fact, at that time, generally attended with great storms.

From hence then it appears, that there is a country to which the disposition of the constellations of the vernal equinox at the time of the earliest delineation known was adapted, and that this is the eastern coast of the Red sea in particular, and as the same time is nearly that also in which the navigation of the Red sea became of importance, it will not be taking a great latitude to conceive, that it was for that navigation it was originally intended.

If this conjecture be founded, the constellation Argo, or the ship, ought to have some reference to it; and the latitude of Ezion Geber, from whence the ships of Solomon set out, to be that of the place to which the sphere should be referred. This latitude is, as set down by Mr. Bruce, about  $28^{\circ}$  north, and in this latitude Canopus, the principal star in the constellation, sets cosmically in the beginning of April, the very month in which the north west monsoon begins, which would carry the ships out from Ezion Geber; it also rises achronically in November, the time of the setting

in of the very monsoon that would bring them back to Suez.

Whether the voyage of the Argonauts was really a voyage to the Euxine sea, it must now be difficult to determine; but that either it was an historic fact transferred with the original colonies to Greece from the voyages in the Indian ocean, or undertaken in imitation of them, is I think probable from the following circumstances: "The people of Abyssinia," (says Mr. Bruce) assert themselves at this day to be "*Agaazi*, that is, a race of shepherds inhabiting the mountains of *Habab*, and have by degrees extended themselves through the whole province of *Tigre*." Vol. 1, p. 387. Again he says, "the Ethiopian *shepherds* at first carried on the trade on their own side of the Red Sea, they carried their India commodities to Thebes, likewise to the different black nations to the south west; in return they brought *gold*." The *Abyssinians* then were termed *Agaazi*, their language *geez*, and *geez* is also the Hebrew word for a *fleece*. To go *le geeza*, or *le agaazi ha zahab*, to the *geeza* of *gold*, i. e. to



the *Abyssinians* who *trade in gold*, was translated *to go to or for the fleece of gold*, and hence a voyage of adventure might be, and I presume was, called seeking the golden fleece. Moreover "the Colchians are said "to have been an Egyptian colony," says the learned Abbé la Pluche, (*Hist. Heavens*, Vol. 1, p. 216,17) and that the people on "the borders of the Phasis went to collect "gold with *sheep-skins*, because the particles "of gold stick in the *wool*." If for sheep-skins we read *Agaazi*, we shall find what they were, viz. the *colonists of Egypt*, who were stationed in the stream to collect the gold.

Such, Sir, appears to me to be the original intent of these constellations, and of the delineation of the sphere; for the voyage to Ophir, if Sofala (as I believe it is,) be Ophir, and even from that to India, the knowledge of the monsoons was necessary, and might well have been studied by *the men of Issachar*, and the Edomites in the time of Solomon. The Egyptians, as Sir Isaac Newton has observed, (*Chron.* p. 212) acknowledged that they received their astronomy from Oes, Oannes, or Euhadnes,

who came from the Red Sea, and hence Sir Isaac Newton supposes, that the science had its origin among the Edomites. Who this Oannes, or Euhadnes, was, is not told. If it may be permitted to hazard a conjecture, I would suppose the name to be a corruption, and as the original name of the Euphrates, Phrath, by prefixing the article *hu* or *eu* was changed into Euphrath, that in like manner the original name here had been modified from *annes* or *adnes*, that is, *al naish*, (plaustrum seu feretrum) the *wain*, pronounced *annaish*, the constellation, now known by the name of Charles's Wain, the great bear, and that which was the earliest guide to the mariner. This *annaish* being the Arabic name, confirms the reference of the origin of the science to the Idumean side of the Red Sea.

To this I will add another argument, which, though founded on a fable, appears to me of great force. The Sothiacal period is well known to have been so highly esteemed in Egypt, as to have been that by which they regulated their account of time; and yet in this very period, the period

commences not from the reign of any of the kings of Egypt, but from that of a king of Babylon, Nabonassar, A. C. 747. The year of the completion of this period, the “ Egyptians expressed by the Phoenix  
 “ a bird of rare beauty, that raised admiration more than any of the rest, and  
 “ returned to Egypt after an absence of  
 “ 1460\* years, (Tacit. An. 6. C. 28.)  
 “ They called it Phoenix, which sig-

\* Tacitus says, 1461. Paullo Fabio, L. Vitellio Coss, post longum seculorum ambitum avis Phoenix in Egyptum venit, præbuitque materiem doctissimis indigenarum, et Græcorum multa super eo miraculo disserendi, sacrum soli id animal. De numero annorum varia traduntur, maxime vulgatum quingentorum spatium sunt qui adseverent *mille quadringentos sexaginta unum* interjici.

It should seem, from the words of Tacitus, that there was some uncertainty as to the length of this period; for he also mentions, that the Egyptian year had not long before been altered to the fixed one beginning the 29th of August, from the variable one, whose beginning returned to the day of the Heliacal rising of the dogstar in 1461 years. The beginning of the variable year at this time was in the middle of August, and being so near the completion of the period as about 60 years, might well have given rise to the story, as it must actually have been a subject of conversation.



“ nifies the advantage they pretended  
 “ was annexed to the concurrence of  
 “ the opening of the year, with the real  
 “ rising of the dog-star, I mean *the*  
 “ *most delightful plenty.* פֶּנֶךְ Phonek délicaté  
 “ nutritus.” La Pluche, Hist. Heavens,  
 Vol. 1, p. 184. The Hebrew name of  
 this bird is הוֹל Hool, which signifies also  
 a revolution, *circumvolvendo et circum*  
*torquendo ligari et constringi.* (Simonis ad  
 verbum.) The name is used in that very  
 remarkable verse of Job, Chap. XXIX. v. 18.  
 “ Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and  
 “ I shall multiply my days like the Hool,”  
 (very ill translated *sand* in our Bible,) that  
 is, according to the exposition of the Rabbi  
 Jalkut (quoted by Wotton or Clement’s  
 Epistle,) *the Phœnix.* It is probably the  
 name of a bird rarely seen and aptly applied

Origen and Tacitus both say, that the Phœnix  
 rolls up his father in a ball of myrrh. Ἐν σφαίρῃ σμύρνης  
 (Con. Cels, p. 228.) In Hebrew this would be  
 מִרְיָה בַּגִּלְגָּל in *a sphere of myrrh*, now מִרְיָה signifies also  
*Dominus*, (Buxt. Lex. Chalds.) and particularly  
*Rabbinus Babylonicus*, (Genebrandi Tab. Rab. ap Re-  
 land.) The Hebrew words then signify *the sphere of*  
*the Babylonish Rabbies*, and give at once the origin of  
 the story.

as an hieroglyphic. But though said to be seen in Egypt, it is said to be a bird of *Arabia*, and therefore refers the origin of the period it denotes to that country. That I have not gone too far in making this inference, the following extract from Niebhur will, I think, sufficiently prove. “ Certain women, “ both Christian and Mahometan, pretend “ to tell what height the Nile will rise to “ by means of certain rites, which they “ practice. These depend upon the popular notion, that in the night of the 17th “ or 18th of June there falls in Habbesh a “ drop, in Arabic *Notka*, into the Nile, “ which causes its waters to ferment and “ swell. To discover the quantity of this “ drop, and the force with which it falls, “ and of consequence the height of the “ river, and the fertility of the lands for “ the year, these women put a bit of paste “ on the roof of the house, on the night “ on which the drop is supposed to fall, “ and they draw their prediction from the “ greater or smaller increase of weight “ which it receives. It is easy to explain “ this experiment, for in the season in “ which it is performed, there fall regu-

“ larly heavy dews throughout Egypt. A  
 “ sensible and learned Mahometan, who  
 “ looked upon the predictions as fooleries,  
 “ told me, that this vulgar error arose, *like*  
 “ *many others*, from an *ambiguous expression*;  
 “ NOTKA signifying in Arabic, both *a drop*,  
 “ and *the time of the sun's entering the sign*  
 “ *of Cancer*; at which season the great  
 “ rains fall in Abyssinia, which cause the  
 “ swelling of the Nile.” (Sect. ii. ch. 8.

Such, Sir, is the particular instance of a fable founded on an ambiguous expression; and several more will hereafter appear.

Of the constellation Argo, there remains somewhat more to be said. You observe, Sir, that “ to denote an inundation, and  
 “ the necessity of preserving one's self,  
 “ (the ancients) painted a boat, the vessel  
 “ Argo;” (p. 247.) and again, that “ this  
 “ constellation bore relation to the river  
 “ Nile, of which it and Sirius foreboded  
 “ the overflowing,” (p. 262.) The relationship of Argo to the overflowing of the Nile is really so very distant, that had it not been for the intervention of Sirius, it



would have been no easy matter to have discovered it. Their right ascension is indeed nearly the same, but their risings and settings, the usual references, are widely different. As to the overflowing of the Nile, there is no danger in it, on the contrary, it is celebrated with festivity. From what has been said, the constellation appears to have had a reference to the trade of the Red Sea and Indian ocean; that it might also have had a reference to an historical event, that is, to the deluge of Noah, is very easily to be conceived. The boat, or ship, with eight persons in it, was a sacred symbol in the rites of Isis; and in the Mosaic history, the ark or boat of Noah was that which would have been chosen as the emblem of navigation, whether by Edomites or Israelites. That the zodiacal signs *now in use* were adapted to the navigation of, and that the delineation of them on the sphere was originally made on, the Idumean side of the Red Sea, appears to me to be certain; and it appears to me to be certain also, that this delineation took place at no great interval from the time of Solomon, if not in his reign. I do not, however, by any means,

Sir, intend to insinuate that astronomy had not been cultivated, and a considerable progress made in it before; on the contrary, the very delineation argues a considerable previous course of observation and study of the science. It appears from the Old Testament, that the year had been divided into twelve months before the deluge, for it is said that Noah saw the tops of the mountains on the first day of the tenth month, and the sixty-first day; afterwards it is expressly said to have been the first day of the following year, so that these months were of thirty days\*, Gen. chap. VIII. The time from the beginning of the deluge to the resting of the ark on mount Ararat, viz. from the seventeenth day of the second, to the same day of the *seventh* month, is said to have been 150 days; and also, that from the first of the tenth month to the first of the following year, there were sixty-one days, which also gives thirty days to the month; from whence it follows, as

\* Ver. 10. "And he stayed yet *other* seven days." Noah had, therefore, already stayed seven days after he sent forth the raven, before he sent out the dove the first time.

the months were of thirty days, and there was no intercalation, that the year of Noah consisted of 360 days; and that this was the first form of the Tropical year, seems to be confirmed by the division of the circle into 360 degrees.

It may be perhaps objected, that the time was reduced by Moses to the standard in use in his days; but this will make the year of 360 days at least as early as the time of Moses, (if the objection be admitted,) and it is the form which certainly preceded that of the Babylonian or Nabonassarean year. This last form of the year the Egyptians received from Callisthenes; and, therefore, whatever the learning of the Egyptians might have previously been, Moses could not have had it from them. (Indeed, the only titles of their wise men, given in Scripture, give no idea of a knowledge of astronomy, though they do of *sculpture*, and of *secret arts*, nor is there any intimation of such knowledge among *them*, that I have been able to find in the Old Testament.) The months, all of thirty days, mark a very early stage of the science; and this seems



to be confirmed by the species of idolatry so general of worshipping the heavenly bodies, an idolatry not very consistent with a knowledge of their motions. It is probable, that during the very imperfect means of determination of the lunar months, and moreover of the Tropical year, the system of the lunar mansions took place, and that they were delineated prior to the constellations of the zodiac; for the Chinese even now divide the zodiac into both twenty-eight constellations and twelve signs, as do also the Hindus. This is an idea of the father of Asiatic literature, Sir W. Jones, whose learning, ingenuity, and taste, will ever be admired and respected, and his too early death deplored as a public loss. This idea he infers from this circumstance, that\* *Parasara* and *Sarga*, two of the *Munis*,

\* He also observes, it appears “ from the comment “ on the *Surza Sidhanta*, that the lunar month, by “ which all religious ceremonies are still regulated, “ was in use before the solar.” The name *Muni* is so nearly the Hebrew מונה, numerans, or numerator, as to point out a Hebrew origin very clearly. The very word is used, *Psa. CXLVIII. v. 4.* in this sense:—  
מונה מספר כוכבים. *He telleth the number of the stars.*

mention only the lunar asterisms; and these Munis flourished about 1180 \* years before Christ: they are the persons to whom the original system of Hindu astronomy, that is, the *Surya Sidhanta*, is said to have been revealed. If then (as I believe) the Hindus derived their astronomy from the Chaldeans or Babylonians, the delineation of the zodiac could hardly have been made 1180 years, A. C. From the established mode of reckoning longitudes and right ascensions, it is to be inferred that the time of this delineation was when the equinoctial intersection coincided with the beginning of the sign Aries; but it is still questionable whether the beginning of the sign was not marked by some star near the middle of the constellation. If the latter idea be true, it will bring the time to correspond nearly with the sphere of Eudoxus; and it is the more probably so,

And that much of the Hindu astronomy, if not all, was brought from thence, I think will be found to be certain hereafter. See one argument in the last note to the tenth of these letters. Quere, Were the Argonautic *Minyæ* any way allied to these Muni?

\* Mr. Davis, 1391. As. Res. Vol. 5. Page 288, which confirms the position the more.

because the stars in the hinder part of the ram are very small, and the limits of the constellation might be liable to uncertainty; and also because that the sign of the Bull will thus begin near the middle of those stars, which, in all probability, from the resemblance of their figure they compose to the head of a bull, gave the name to the constellation. Whether the equinoctial intersection did coincide with the middle or the beginning of the constellation Aries I will offer what I conceive to be an irrefragable proof, that in the original delineation of the zodiac, the signs Gemini and Cancer were divided by the solstitial colure; and also that the Hindus did, as I have above-mentioned, borrow their zodiacal signs from the inventors, or the Babylonians; because that technical terms are among the surest marks of the place where sciences originate. It is this, —the word Gemini, in the Hebrew, תמים, signifies both the *accomplished* or *fulfilled*, (six months) and signifies also *twins* \*. This emblem, therefore, other-

\* Hence I am induced to think that the Urim and Thummim on the breast-plate of the high-priest should be translated the *lights* and their *periods*; that is, cycles



wise scarcely to be accounted for, was in that language appropriate to the completion of the annual period when the Sun had gained the summit, and was preparing to return ; and with this position, what I have said of some other signs agrees. In the Old Testament, excepting what is said of *the men of Issachar* in the time of David, I have not been able to observe any thing decisive relative to this subject, from the time of David to that of Hezekiah, unless the 19th and 148th Psalms \* were composed on some remarkable occasion connected with it. I do not recollect that any of the prophets upbraid Egypt with the pride of science ; the prophet Isaiah does, however, upbraid Babylon with it in very remarkable words : “ ‘Thou  
 “ art wearied in the multitude of thy  
 “ counsels : let now the † *dividers* of the

of the sun and moon, (called in Gen. i. the two great lights,) by which the High Priest determined the great festivals.

\* It is much to be lamented that the order and proper division of the Psalms has not yet been better determined ; they are at present confused indeed.

† חברי שמים, Vid. Simonis.

“ heavens, the observers of the stars, that  
 “ *determine*\* the *months*, stand up and save  
 “ thee,” Chap. XLVII. v. 13. From these  
 words it appears, that at a period subsequent  
 to the time of David, and nearly about the  
 time when the æra of Nabonassar began,  
 there were persons in Babylon engaged  
 in astronomical observations, and the de-  
 termination of the months ; and that these  
 pursuits were at the time considered as of  
 high importance ; and it is confirmed by  
 the message of the princes of Babylon to  
 Hezekiah, to enquire of the *wonder* † *done*  
*in the land*, (the return of the shadow ten  
 degrees backward) 2 Chron. XXXII. v. 31.

\* מוריעים.

† Whether this wonder was by an increase of the  
 refractive power of the atmosphere I will not say, but  
 will beg leave to mention a curious instance of such  
 refraction.—I was informed by a person of credit, that  
 near Bareges, in the latter end of the month of August,  
 1789, when about sun-set, a most violent thunder-storm  
 was approaching, he saw the sun set, and in about ten  
 or fifteen minutes, to his astonishment, re-appear com-  
 pletely above the horizon. The storm was one of the  
 most tremendous I ever saw, and the heavens a canopy  
 of fire for a considerable time, when it was coming on.

This wonder, it is evident, was local, but the fame of it had reached Babylon. The ten degrees on the *degrees* of Ahaz, if *Ahaz* be a proper name, and not the name of a mathematical instrument (since the word signifies *to take*) does not give any precise idea, and therefore nothing of consequence can be inferred from it farther than that a mode of taking degrees of altitude was in use at that time. But it appears to be a just inference, that between the time of David and that of Hezekiah, the accuracy of observation had advanced from a general to a more particular mode, from observing *the times*, to *determining the months*; and that its course was from Idumea, or Palestine, to Chaldeea, and from thence to India and Egypt.

The signs having once been fixed, it was then, as it is now, necessary to recur to remote periods, in order to determine more correctly the length of the Tropical year, and the cycles of the moon and planets; and that this is not merely hypothesis, is evident from the epoch of *Molad Tohu*, or the year before the creation, now in use in the Jewish computations. The creation



and the deluge were certainly the two most important parts of the history of man connected with the heavens; these, then, we should naturally expect to find a reference to in the emblematic language of the constellations, and next to these the labours of man; and these are all accordingly to be found there; and I trust I shall prove hereafter, that they are to be found there in their natural order, that is, of an emblem founded on historic fact.

When the nature of an investigation of this kind is considered, I hope I shall not be thought too prolix; and I shall be happy, if what has been said may be the means of elucidating, in any degree, a subject hitherto certainly not clearly and fully known. But it is time to proceed with your observations.

Of the constellation Taurus you alledge that, "The Ethiopian of Thebes called—  
 " stars of the Ox or Bull, those under  
 " which it was convenient to plough the  
 " earth." Exclusive of the objection to the unfounded principle of Mr. Dupuis, on

which this observation rests, there would be another which would controvert the principle, which is, that it is very dubious whether they did plough at all in the early ages in Egypt. Herodotus (in Euterpe) says, the Egyptians, after the subsiding of the Nile, sent their *pigs* to turn up the soil; the constellation, therefore, should rather be the *pig* than the *bull*, even so low as his time. The origin of the name was, I believe, the figure of the Hyades, and this only; but the idea attached to the constellation had, I believe, a higher reference.

If the period I have ventured to assume, as that of the delineation of the sphere, be correct, the equinoctial intersection must, at the time of the creation, have been nearly at its entrance into Taurus; and more certainly at the time of the deluge it must have been at the end of its progress through that sign, or so near it, as to make the end of the sign the most obvious note of its situation; and hence the  $\mathfrak{x}$ , which I believe was the ancient mark of this sign, is easily explicable. Kircher\* says, (on

\* Obelisci Interp. Ed. Romæ, 1666, p. 44.

what authority I know not) that this mark means, “*Divinæ mentis in rerum omnium productione motum ac diffusionem.*”—*A motion and diffusion of the divine mind in the production of all things.* It may, perhaps, have this signification, as denoting what I believe it does, the new order of things from the flood. The mark is, however, evidently composed of three parts, ☾, O, and +, which I would interpret thus: ☾, *a boat*; O, *the earth*; and +, the intersection of the colure and equinoctial; whence it will signify the place of the colure, when a single boat\* or vessel was on the earth, i. e. at the time of the deluge. Besides this sign, Kircher has another of half a bull and half a ram, which seems to denote this same epocha of the deluge.

\* If the crescent were erect, I should be inclined to interpret it, *the sun and moon in conjunction at the solstice*, the time when the tropical year may be supposed to have begun periodically; and that Mercury Thoth, to whose name it is now affixed, was the discoverer of it. If it be considered as 8, the mark of the sign Taurus at the equinox, it will still refer to the time of the deluge. The exposition given in the text seems to me to be the most appropriate.



The component parts of the above sign have, indeed, since been divided between Taurus and the planet Venus, and the entire applied to Mercury, the symbol of the inventor of science. That Venus was a deity the symbol of the deluge, is evident from her image as the Dea Syra, which is very nearly the same with that of Vishnoo, in the first of his incarnations. The three signs ☿, ♀, and ♂, do therefore belong to the same event, and that event was the deluge.

From what I have already said, I hope it appears that we are *not* "at liberty" to make what arrangements we please "in the eternity that preceded the time of Abraham," (note 48,) and that it is not enough to be told that the figures of the constellations are emblematic of the seasons, or that a species of theology has been formed upon the astronomical system : though this last may be admitted without injury to the primæval theology. The Mosaic history I will prove, even from your own account of it, collected as it is from all accounts of it, rather than that of Moses, could not

have been founded upon it; and as to the others, if such astronomic systems of theology do not only retain marks and vestiges of the primæval one, and if the very constellations do contain allusions decisively referable to a series of recorded facts, which are a suitable substratum for such an allusive mythology, which explain it satisfactorily, and without which the mythology itself would be in many respects void of reference and consistency, there ought certainly to be no hesitation as to the conclusion; the facts must have subsisted before the mythology.

You acknowledge, Sir, that according to what you esteem the oldest system, (that is, the Egyptian) the *bull* breaking the *mundane egg* was the symbol of creation; but then, as the idea of *creation* is not friendly to your own system, whilst you are willing to establish Egyptian doctrines in some other respects, in this, which is the very basis not only of the Egyptian, but also of the Hindu, and every other mythology I know of, you would sweep it away to erect a baseless fabric of your own. "The Bull" (say you, p. 243), is merely that of the

“ heavens, which in times of yore opened  
 “ the *age of the creation, the equinox of*  
 “ *spring.*” *The age of creation! the equinox*  
*of spring!* So then the mundane egg is  
 pieced and made whole every winter, in  
 order to be broken every spring. If so,  
 how does it happen that this *mundane egg*  
 has *no place* on the sphere as well as the  
 bull? I do not know whether the analogy  
 to natural history, or the substitution of  
 expressions, is the most strange; that the  
 breaking of an egg should disclose con-  
 cealed animation, and give new life to a  
 being previously inanimate, or if animated,  
 undistinguishable as such, is the order of  
 nature. But does the being return annually  
 to its shell to be re-produced? Had you ob-  
 served the third transformation of Vishnoo,  
 the reference would have been easily deter-  
 mined; but then I own it would overturn  
 all you have said.

That the constellation of the *Bear* was  
 originally the *Boar*, (as you mention,  
 p. 256), is very probable. A boar is re-  
 presented in the Hindu mythology as  
 having plunged into the waters and brought



up the earth on his tusks; and hence Vishnoo is also drawn with boar's tusks, bearing the mundane egg in the same manner. The three first transformations of Vishnoo evidently relate to the deluge. In the first, Vishnoo, in the shape of a fish, recovers the law out of the waters, which had been plunged in them by evil spirits. In the second, he obtains the most valuable productions which the sea in its pride had boasted that it contained. And in the third, he recovers the earth, and placing the tortoise\* on the water, and the serpent

\* It is evident not only from the tract, but also from the plate No. 1, in Mr. Holwel's India tracts, that Vishnoo placed the earth on the serpent, and the serpent on the tortoise; and hence we have the polar circle of the ecliptic marked out by the serpent, and the place of the pole of the equator by the tail of the serpent (which rests on the tortoise,) its place at the time of the deluge, the time from which (as probably the time of a grand conjunction) their astronomical calculations were made. At the commencement of the Cali Yug, the pole was in the *tail* of the *serpent*. Possibly the yugs themselves are only epochs of different conjunctions traced back to the greatest number of coincidences, which, according to astrological ideas, must have proportional *virtue* or effect on human affairs. Why the serpent is made to rest on the

with a thousand heads upon the tortoise, he retires to his residence. In the representation of the second, Vishnoo is drawn sitting on a lotus-headed column, which rests on a tortoise; and beneath the tortoise, on the surface of the waters, is the bow, *Dennok*, one of the fourteen precious things the sea cast out. The lotus-headed column is supposed to represent a mountain which Vishnoo had thrown into the sea, in order to compel it to give up its treasures, and which was afterwards thus supported. Baldæus in Churchill, Coll. of Voyages, vol. iii. p. 769, 770, 771. The egg, opened, discovers a town resting on a crescent, or boat. Vishnoo is well known to be the Deity, in his character of the *preserver*. The emblem is as clearly that of the preservation of the family of

tortoise I do not see, unless the tortoise marks the commencement of one of the yugs; or that as an Hindu astronomer told Sir W. Jones, the *zodiac* was like the *Datura*, meaning only the circular month of the funnel; so the polar circle of the ecliptic may be considered as like a tortoise, in whose circumference the pole of the equator moves by the precession of the equinoxes, and with a motion so slow, as not to be ill connected with the emblem as allusive to the motion of that animal.

Noah at the deluge, and as strong a proof of the truth of the Mosaic history of it, as it is possible for an emblem to be. The egg, with the crescent at the bottom, represents the ark inclosing the inhabitants of the earth: it is borne up by the preserver, and the bow in the preceding transformation is the rainbow, the symbol of its safety in future. The *lotus* is every where a symbol of the same, because it always flowers on the surface of the waters. Nor is this emblematic history all: the real history itself is preserved in the Puranas, and is given in an extract from them in the Asiatic researches; and has from them been lately published by Mr. Maurice, in his judicious selection of Sanscreeet fragments.

This mythology, evidently founded on the tradition of the deluge, you must allow to be as ancient as the Egyptian; and there is good reason to believe it to be originally the same. It is not safe to draw a general inference from a particular term; but as it is known that the learning of the Egyptians was celebrated at an early period, and that the title of a *learned* Brahmin, that is,



a *Pundit*, is, even at this day, Pachespputtee *Misr*; and *Misr*, you know, signifies Egyptian; it gives room to believe that the Hindu learning was in some degree derived from Egypt. However this be, there is a striking similarity between them; and perhaps, at a future day, the learning of Egypt may in a great measure be recovered in India.

In the Orphic egg then, and the mundane egg of India, we do acknowledge the symbol of the world, the emblem of creation, and of the preservation of mankind from that deluge which alone could have made such an impression, or have given rise to the correct and perfect symbol. We glory in acknowledging the truth you strive in vain to shake off; the truth you are forced to confess its reference to, while wresting it from the true and just application; and whilst you are obliged to say that “the words, *the breath of God moving upon the face of the waters*, alluded to a wind which *announced* the overflowing of the Nile, and *seemed* to be the preliminary of creation,” (p. 271.) *Seemed*, Sir? Nay, it

*was.* You appeal to reason loudly, but what is this ! Is this reasoning or sophistry ; is it light or prejudice ? An annual event a preliminary of creation ! And this is the new light of reasoning.

You acknowledge the priests studied the most useful sciences, and that from hence they acquired power. Knowledge, Sir, joined with good sense, is power every where. The having either or both is a blessing or a curse, accordingly as it is employed. You say, (p. 250,) theirs has been ruinous, and call an unqualified reprobation a narrative of facts. The precluding of a reply was, however, to be expected ; for certainly their conduct was ruinous to your whole system. In teaching men to check self-interest, they impeded the very first mover ; in teaching them the fear of a Deity, they opposed licentiousness ; and in setting them the example of severe and rigid discipline ; for Arrian says of those old astronomical priests, *the lives of these sophists are not luxurious, but of all the most miserable,* (Arrian, Ed. Gron. Lug. Ba . 1764, p. 326.) the umbrage to pride and luxury was in-

tolerable. In leading peaceable lives they repressed the ardour of resistance, and in study they were a shame to the ignorant; and to crown their ruinous exertions by strengthening the bonds of society and natural affection, they did their utmost to prevent, to retard, and at last to remedy the effects of the revolutions of empires. No wonder, Sir, you declare their labours ruinous.



## LETTER X.

SIR,

WHEN much refinement is necessary to support a system, it is very liable on that account to suspicion. You have been at very great pains to invent a reason for the belief in the immortality of the soul, to ground a very simple inference on a complicated mythology, and to bring all other nations into an Egyptian bondage. The belief of the immortality of the soul is the result of a very little reflection. An invisible agent actuates the body; in death the body remains as before. What is become of the invisible agent? It did exist invisible; it may, it does so still; gone to another body, or another place. So little, Sir, is necessary to found this doctrine upon; and can you controvert it?

Whatever may be the basis of this doctrine to others, to the Christian, Sir, your

derivation of it is of no moment whatsoever. His faith is built on the credibility of the Gospel, and on this only; so that it is needless to animadvert upon your system in this respect, unless it were proved that it is impossible to derive the doctrine from any other source, which I have shewn it is not; or that the Gospel did derive it from this, a surmise to which the Gospel is in direct opposition, as the only proof the Gospel refers to, or admits of, as a principle, is the single fact of the resurrection of Christ.

After having proposed no less than seven previous systems, we come at length to that which in the title you sum up thus: "*The world a machine: worship of the demi-ourgos, or supreme artificer.*" At this period, you observe, "some superficial minds losing the chain of ideas which had directed these (the previous) profound enquiries, or ignorant of the facts which served as their basis, rendered abortive all the results that had been obtained from them," (p. 274.); that is, having observed the order and regu-

clarity of the motions of the heavenly bodies, they *rendered all the results abortive*—And by what means? “They insisted that the “universe differed in no respect from an “ordinary machine,” (*ibid.*) ; they insisted it was a machine strictly so called, not an *ordinary* machine, but the most wonderful in contrivance, and magnificent in effect. Hence they did conclude, as you express it: “A machine cannot form itself, there must “be a workman to construct it; its very “existence implies this. The world is a “machine, it has therefore an artificer,” (p. 275). Even so, Sir. It was thus that Newton *lost the chain of his ideas*, and *rendered abortive* the discoveries of philosophy. And Locke, in his logics and metaphysics, and every honest man of plain understanding, may well do the same. Let us try the converse. *The world is not a machine*, then *it moves itself*. But every particle of matter contradicts this. Not one can move itself. When the philosophers had then found the heavenly bodies to be strictly material and subject to fixed laws, the recourse to an intelligent disposer and ruler was absolutely of necessity. So far was it from losing,



that it was extending and fixing the chain of ideas to the only object to which it could be ultimately attached with security.

“ It was in vain,” you alledge, “ that philosophy objected to the hypothesis, “ that this artificer did not stand less in “ need of parents and an author,” (p. 275). If it was objected in vain, it is a presumption that it had little to recommend it. The objection was a stupid one ; for an intelligent being who originates action, may have been and be eternal ; the only sophism is in such an objection. To such a being a prior being is unnecessary. Admit such a being, and all is rationally accounted for\* ; a cause eternal and intelligent is

\* As to the derivation of a Trinity, consisting of the Creator, the logos, and the soul of the world, Christianity has nothing to say to it ; no such Trinity is to be found in the Old or the New Testament, and Christianity acknowledges no other authority. As to the attempts to define the Deity, it can be done only by his attributes as far as they are known, and a negation of the peculiar characteristics of matter. A substance without form, and a *body* without figure (p. 277), is, I grant, a delirium, but the delirium is Mr. Volney’s. A *substance* without body or parts, that

adequate every way. You say, Sir, adding such a link to the chain is of little value. Sir, it is NOT *adding a link*, it is the discovery of *that* on which its *first link* DEPENDS; of that which, however you seem to reject, you are constantly obliged to admit, under the names of *nature*, *secret mover*, and even *God*; which your own confession admits to have been acknowledged as far as historic record extends, and which you seek to oppose by systems, which on your own hypothesis "the mind had run through" at a period anterior to the positive recitals "of history," (p. 278); that is, which have no positive foundation whatsoever, and are but the invention of Mr. Volney, or if adopted by him, but imaginary, whoever was the inventor.

In the endeavour to investigate the attributes of the Deity, and the laws of his moral and physical order of things, much must necessarily be obscure. Were there no subject for the curiosity of man to work

is, without these properties as we know them, which we do in matter only, is a just definition not only of the Deity, but of the soul.

upon, the mind would stagnate, but it is not by rashness and impetuous decision, but by gradual, and patient, and cautious research, that improvement is to be attained. It is not by braving the light and daring its utmost splendor, that we are to enjoy its blessings or investigate its nature; we may complain of a blindness which we force upon ourselves by so doing; but we shall have as poor a claim to compassion as we shall have prospect of success.

It is certainly somewhat strange, that whilst you allow to your earlier systems an accuracy of observation, and of reasoning so far as to admit their having discovered the rotundity of the globe, the *half year's* night of the northern pole, and *minute* geometrical divisions, you should at once sink them into an abyss of error when they approach to the discovery of one supreme ruler of the universe. In the next system, this is, however, accounted for: we arrive at *the period of positive recitals of history*; and it is certainly more easy to invent where nothing is known, than to controvert positive recitals of history; and



if by such invention the mind can be prejudiced against the history, it is at least a point gained for the argument, if not for the truth.

It was a very delicate matter to treat of the Mosaic history, and more especially to one who is said to have been in Syria, and in Egypt, and who has given the world an account of both. Moses you consider as one of the bold and energetic spirits who formed vast projects of ambition. Ambition in itself may be a virtue or a vice, according to the object and the means; if both are just, it is virtue; if not, it is vice; it is the danger of making a sacrifice of rectitude to it, that makes it so seldom a virtue. You have not shewn any thing which would in Moses, had he possessed ambition, have made it a vice, and you have contradicted the history\* in attributing it to him in any degree, who is expressly said to have been *meek above all others*. (Num. Chap. XII, v. 3.) You insist that his God was an Egyptian God, because

\* See Mr. Levi's defence of the Old Testament, where this is fully and well proved.

the name Jehovah, given to him, or as you write it Yahouh, bears a similarity to Jou, in Jou-piter. Of the stress to be laid on etymology, I shall have occasion to speak somewhat at large presently. In the present instance nothing can be more frivolous. The Hebrew word denotes absolute existence, and the Celtic root of Jou-pater denotes the same idea, which must be expressed by correspondent terms in any language as nearly as they can be found. But whence, Sir, do you prove that the name Jupiter or Joupiter was ever used in Egypt? From Diodorus Siculus it seems, "Let us hear," say you, "The Greeks and Latins explain their theology." "The Egyptians, (says Diodorus after Manetho priest of Memphis,) in giving names to the five elements, called *spirit* or ether *Youpiter* on account of the true meaning of that word, for spirit is the source of life," (Note 84, p. 381.) I believe it will suffice to say, that there is no such word as *Jupiter* or *Joupiter* in the original. The words of Diodorus are, Το μέν οὖν πνεῦμα Δια προσαγορεύσαι. That they called spirit *Dia*. The word *Jupiter* is the translation of *Dia*, as you will find or

may have found in Westien's Edit. Amst. 1746, Lib. 1, 11.

Greek has been little attended to for many years in France, but still, Sir, in drawing such an inference, it deserved an enquiry whether the word in the *translation* was really *in the original* in the same form before the inference was drawn.

No idea can be more sublime, no term more just than the one adopted by Moses. There is no trace of his wishing to blot out the uses of astronomy. Much more of his institutions than is generally supposed, did I believe belong to that science. But he did forbid the worship of the stars, and of all idols, and confined worship to the sole proper object.

In the very first verse of Genesis, Moses declares, that *God created the heaven and the earth*, and yet from the words of Strabo, you would infer that Moses considered the Deity as the soul of the world; that is somewhat indistinct and unknown, unintelligible alike to the ear and the under-



standing. A reference to Strabo for the doctrine of Moses carries its own reprobation with it.

We have in this section, and the note, another instance of the convenience of a hardy assertion in the text, on the credit of the notes being overlooked. The text says, "the name of Osiris, even preserved in his (Moses's) song," (p. 281.) Now for the note; "These are the *literal expressions* of the book of Deuteronomy, Chap. XXXII, *the works of Tsour are perfect*; now *Tsour* has been translated by the word creator; its proper signification is to give *forms*, and this is one of the *definitions* of Osiris in Plutarch," (p. 384.) The *very name* then turns out to be at last a supposed correspondence of a Hebrew word with a *definition* of Plutarch. The word Tsour, which you have confounded with Jotser, a creator, as *laying a foundation*, signifies a *rock*, a *place of defence*, or *difficult access*. Neither of them properly refers to *form*, but to a *basis*; the passage runs thus: "Because I will call upon the name of Jehovah, ascribe ye greatness to our

" God, the rock, (our strength and defence) whose works are all perfect." (V. 3, 4.) So that according to your assertion, Moses, in ascribing greatness to Jehovah, calls him Osiris, the God of the enemies of Israel.

Little as one can admire the concise mention of Moses, the prudence in being so concise is certainly worthy of admiration. Forced by imperious facts to concur in the received history, as to the time of his bringing the Israelites out of Egypt, and the reality of his having given them their law, there is not even a hint at his prophecies so miraculously fulfilling and fulfilled. This was very prudent, Sir, the XXVIIIth Chapter of Deuteronomy is an unanswerable proof of revelation.

From the three following sections, 10, 11, 12, all that is to be inferred is, that a similarity of religious institutions prevailed in Persia, Tartary, and India, indeed throughout Asia, with the exception of the Indian settlements of the Jews. In the last of these sections you derive the Hindu

trinity of Brama Vishnoo and Seeva, or Chiven, from the doctrines of Zoroaster, which by the Hindu records must have been taught in India above a thousand years before Zoroaster was born. It is the doctrine of the first Ved, which is said to have been written about four thousand years ago.

At length, Sir, we have arrived at the great object to which all your system is directed; the serpent, hatched and matured in the caverns of Egypt, having writhed itself through the obscurities of Sabæism, rears itself to attack the heel of the chosen seed, and I trust, to accelerate the bruising of its own head. But little favoured hitherto by wise and religious governments, now amidst the ruins of religion and of principle, it presents its most threatening aspect, and utters hisses of opprobrious insult from a multitude of tongues. But we will not be dismayed at the cry of alarm; the cry is the cry of the desert, but we are not alone—for our God is with us.

The errors and lapses of the Israelites, Sir, are as much to be pitied by us as they



are to be condemned; the idolatrous rites of their neighbours, offering the allurements of licentiousness under the appearance of a religious ceremony, to the vicious were a sanction, and to the heedless a snare. These, you say, altered the religion of Moses.— Did they alter the *law* of Moses? That is the question, which you yourself decide in the negative; you acknowledge that the dogmas of the neighbouring nations, which you say were adopted by the Jews, were unknown to him, (p. 285.) Whether all the dogmas you allude to were or were not known to him is of no consequence, as to the identity of the law of Moses. On your own grounds that law has not been corrupted. And, till you can erase the three first chapters from the book of Genesis, you will never be able to prove that it was necessary for the Jews to look to another nation for the doctrine of good and evil spirits, or a future state. Silence is no more a constant mark of ignorance, than speaking or writing is of knowledge; enough, however, is said to infer all the rest from. A simple question was sufficient. Why should the serpent have tempted Eve, contrary to the will of God? the only as-

signable motives are revenge, and rebellion against God; for a gratuitous desire of doing evil is scarcely to be attributed even to the Devil himself. So easy would it be to make out a theory if nothing was known, which I do not allow. Your note puts the Jews, the Magi, and the Bramins on the same footing; as to the remote origin of their religious tenets, I believe they were so; and that that origin was a tradition received from the family of Noah. This was the source of that tenet of a future deliverer, which spread over Asia, and it is very idle indeed to refer them to other nations for a tenet, with which their own records open. Your mode of accounting for the effect of prophecy is hardly worth notice. "From the fall of Samaria some sagacious spirits predicted the same fate to Jerusalem," (p. 285.) Really, Sir, if this was all, there was no great sagacity in the case. Pray, Sir, from what *fortuitous analogy* was it that Moses predicted that Jerusalem should be destroyed "by a nation *from far*, "from the end of the earth, by a nation whose *language* the Jewish nation should not understand." Deut. XXVIII. v. 49.

The prediction of the deliverer is not however, it seems, so accidental. “ It  
 “ was recorded in the sacred books of the  
 “ Persians and Chaldees, that the world,  
 “ *composed* of a total *revolution* of twelve  
 “ thousand periods, was divided into two  
 “ partial revolutions, of which, one the  
 “ age and reign of good, was to terminate  
 “ at the expiration of SIX thousand years;  
 “ and the other, the reign of evil, at the  
 “ expiration of another SIX thousand.—  
 You proceed: “ Judging from the appear-  
 “ ance of things, that the present was the  
 “ age of misfortune, they inferred it would  
 “ terminate at the end of the SIX thousand  
 “ pretended years,” (p. 287,8.)

This remark is levelled either at the Rabbinical tradition of the duration of the world, or the prophecy of Daniel, or both; and is equally harmless to both. The tradition was, that there were two thousand years without the law, two thousand to be under the law, and two thousand under the Messiah. This tradition, according to the Hebrew computation of the age of the world, as the text now stands, would, as



to the two former parts, be somewhat near the history, if the law be considered as beginning with the call of Abraham.

At the time of the coming of our blessed Saviour into the world, the year from the creation is, according to the Hebrew text, generally computed to have been 4004. Walton has however given arguments in favour of the computation according to the Septuagint, that appear to me incontrovertible. According to this, the birth of our blessed Saviour is to be referred to the year from the creation, 5500. *Bov. Ins. Chron. Lib. 2, cap. 11*, and not as you have supposed it, 5600. The prophet Daniel writing in the reign of Artaxerxes, Longimanus must have written about the year\* 5000 according to this calculation.

\* It has been objected to the book of Daniel, that it *abounds* in Greek words, or words of Greek origin. I believe the following is the whole catalogue of such words, 1. משרוקיתא Mashrukitha Fistula, Συγκλητης Fistulator. 2. קתרוס Kitharas, Κιθάρα Cithara. 3. סמכא Sambuca, Σαμβούκη Idem. 4. פסנתרין Pesanterin, Ψαλτήριον Psalterium. 5. סומפניה Sumphoneiah, Συμφωνία Symphônia. 6. פטיש Phatish. Πέλασος Petasus. 7. מניכא Menicha, Μανάνης Torques. 8. אשפין Ashphin Astrologi. Σόφοι Sapientes. Of these the first is of Hebrew

Now Daniel prophecied that the Messiah should be cut off, not at the end of the SIX thousand years, but at the end of 490

origin decisively, the fourth is, I believe, a compound Persian word, signifying *the sound of the flute*; the sixth and seventh are names of parts of dress, and of doubtful origin; the rest are, I believe, Greek, and I also believe they fix the date of the book to its usually assigned epoch; all but the last are names of musical instruments, and the last a corruption of a known denomination.—The terms are here used to mark the magnificence of the solemnity, and therefore they denote performances of *unusual* excellence; on such occasions *foreign* resources are the most generally enquired after, wherever they exist in their greatest perfection. At the very time music was in its greatest progress in Greece; vide Petavii, *Rat. Temporum*, pars 1, lib. 2, sub finem, it was the age of the early Lyric poets of Alcman, and Stesichorus of Sappho, Archilochus, and Alcæus.—It was also the age of the seven wise men.

It is therefore every way to be presumed that Nebuchadnezzar, in possession of the ports of Syria and Palestine, on the Mediterranean, should have procured Greek musicians for his festival; nor is it less so, that his wise men or astrologers should have assumed a foreign name, at that time rising into reputation. At any other time, when there was no novelty to recommend them, the musicians, or the title, would hardly have been of value; at that period both were characters of sufficient note to be assumed with success, even by strolling pretenders to the characters, and from the man-

years from the year 5036, of this computation, that is, in the year 5526. So that according to your representation he must have made a mistake, of no less than 474 years out of a thousand; and if the Jewish computation be assumed, an error of no less than 2000 years out of the SIX by the time he fixed upon. So far was it from the termination you assign, when the expectation of the Messiah prevailed, and was fulfilled.

At length, Sir, after every effort to evade the Mosaic history, and the prophecy of Daniel, you inform us, that in your adopted mythological one, “*it was recorded, that in the beginning a man and woman had by their fall brought sin and evil into the world.*” —“By this,” you say, “was denoted the fact of the celestial *virgin*, and the herds-

ner in which the words are used, particularly *συμφωνία*, it is most probable that the use of it here was merely one of those attempts at celebrity which are made by such persons, by borrowing foreign names, of whose meaning they have but a very imperfect idea; or the particular application of a foreign term, as in the word *organ*, which is originally only the name of an *instrument* of any kind.



“ man *Bootes*, who setting heliacally at the  
 “ autumnal equinox, resigned the heavens  
 “ to the wintry constellations, and seemed  
 “ in sinking below the horizon to intro-  
 “ duce into the world the genius of evil,  
 “ Ahrimanes, represented by the constel-  
 “ lation of the serpent.” If so, how came  
 the former constellation to have the name  
 of *the virgin* and not of *Ormuzd*, the genius  
 of light. To have attributed this to *Bootes*  
 rather than the virgin would not have been  
 so convenient, and I cannot but congratu-  
 late you on that remaining resource, the  
 heliacal setting. A star may rise or set  
 so many different ways, heliacally, cosmi-  
 cally, or achronically, that it must be an  
 unaccommodating and stubborn hypothesis  
 indeed which some one of the six cases  
 would not suit; and yet it so happens here.  
 How her setting heliacally could seem to  
 be a resignation of the heavens to the genius  
 of evil or the wintry constellations, when  
 in less than a month after she rises heli-  
 acally, and becomes an harbinger of the  
 winter’s sun, renewing her visible reign, and  
 continuing it throughout the winter and  
 spring, till the return of summer, is rather

paradoxical. Besides, Sir, so far is she from *introducing* the genius of evil or the serpent, that during the greatest part of the time she is visible, the serpent is visible also; and even on your own supposition, she does not *introduce* but *leave* him *after* her. The only time when she could seem to introduce him is in the opposite season, when appearing in the east after sun-set, in her achronical rising, the serpent, a short time after, appears in the east following her.

It must not be forgotten that you are now accounting for the Mosaic history of the fall. And here first of all the woman *retires* from the evil principle that is, say you, she *introduces* it. Moses says, the evil principle seduced her; what that is on your scheme, we shall now see.

“ It was recorded,” say you, “ *That the woman had decoyed and seduced the man; and in reality the virgin setting first appears to draw the herdsman after her.*” (p. 290.)

If *setting first* then is to stand for *seduction*, as Bootes sets before the serpent, the

order will be, the woman decoyed the man, and the man decoyed the serpent, that is, by *transmutation* and *adaptation*, the serpent seduced the woman, Q. E. D.

In the next step, the genius of *Winter* with a "*flaming sword*," (p. 291,) drives them both from the summer heaven. "When the virgin and the herdsman sunk below the western horizon, Perseus rises on the opposite side." In the note you add, that "Medusa's head is no other than that of the virgin." (Ibid.) This idea is borrowed from the truly learned and excellent Abbe Pluche, who thinks that Medusa was Isis, to whom the Egyptians, as he supposes, gave the name Medusa, "which signified simply the *pressing of olives*" מִדֻּשָּׁה Medusha. They also gave the same figure the name of the two wheels that served to press the olives; it was called גַּלְגַּל galgal *rota*, whence came the name Gorgon." (Hist. of the Heavens, vol. 1, p. 135.) The Arabians, he observes, have left Medusa her name Algol, *the wheel*, in their sphere. The fable of the Gorgon head he explains as taken from the pressing



of the olives, which seems to *turn fruit into stones*.

Medusa then was intended to mark the season of pressing olives, according to this explanation; I am however persuaded that the true signification is somewhat different. After harvest the grinding of corn succeeded; this was done by rolling a round stone upon it in a kind of mortar, and was proverbially laborious, and from the constant and severe task being generally imposed upon slaves, the sight of the heads of corn might with some propriety be said to turn men into stone. This sign then alludes to the corn harvest, and as Parash פֶּרֶשׁ, in Hebrew, signifies a flail, and that *Madus* is also *trituration*, this signification is strongly confirmed. As Parash signifies also an *horseman*, the story of Perseus\* and Medusa, is only a my-

\* To this I may add that I believe Andromeda is the earth as yet bound by winter, and that the origin of the name is אָנַד *anad*, יָדָה *iadah*, רֶחֶם *rehem*, *ligavit virginis manus*, the binding of the virgin's hand, and that the fable of her having been exposed to a sea-monster, is founded on the equinoctial rise of the tides, which seem to threaten the destruction of the earth. In the lan-

thological representation of threshing the heads of corn cut off in harvest, to which the equivocal meaning of the word Parash gave rise. Granting your idea to be true, it no way affects my objections.

To resume your statement: “ *That from this virgin would be born, would spring up a shoot, a child that should crush the serpent’s head, and deliver the world from sin.*” By this,” you say, “ was denoted the sun which at the period of the summer solstice, at the precise moment that the Persian Magi drew the horoscope of the new year, *found itself* in the bosom of the virgin, and which on this account was represented in their astrological pictures in the form of an infant, suckled by a chaste virgin, and afterwards became,

guage of fabulous representation, the sea-monster threatens the virgin. *Parash* signifies also to loosen, and when the sun is near Perseus he may be said to unbind the earth, and hence the fable of Perseus and Andromeda. Andromeda is nearly opposite to Virgo. Andromeda is bound, Virgo bears the fruit. Therefore these two relate to the opposite seasons and in the same respect, which I presume to be the fruits of the vine and the olive, as Perseus with Medusa do to the corn.

“ at the vernal equinox, the ram or lamb  
 “ conqueror of the constellation of the ser-  
 “ pent, which disappeared from the heavens,”  
 (p. 291.) If you had not mentioned that the  
 vernal equinox was in the ram, I should  
 certainly have recurred to Mr. Dupuis’s *plau-  
 sible reasons*, in order to find out how the  
 sun found himself in the bosom of the vir-  
 gin at the summer solstice. In the origi-  
 nal it is, I presume, for I have not been  
 able to procure it, *dans le sein, in the womb*,  
 was conceived in the summer solstice, and  
 born in spring. If this could have any, even  
 the most impious meaning to a christian  
 ear, as virgo is not the sign of the summer  
 solstice, it can have no foundation in the  
 hypothesis you offer. It is at once im-  
 piety and nonsense.

I have already said, and repeat it, that on  
 no other system than the Mosaic history,  
 written or traditional, will you be able to  
 explain this part of the description of the con-  
 stellations; that there must have been a his-  
 tory of such singular facts to build the mytho-  
 logy upon; and it is evident even from every  
 later addition to the constellations. Whence



are *Sobieski's shield*, the *Telescope*, the *Air-pump*, the *Toucan*, and the *Indian*, but from history political and natural, and inventions of importance, all *previously* known and esteemed worth recording? Why the very sign should be called the virgin, you neither have given, nor can give, a decisive reason. Why is she not the *wife* of Bootes?—Whence is it that the *virgin* should have a *child*? what system can make this clear without the miserable resources to which you have been reduced? There is one, and there is but one, that of the Bible.

It is an ancient tradition that the world was created in autumn (probably on the supposition that the fruits of the earth were ripe for food, and hence rather at the beginning than the end of the season), and as the man and woman were created at the same period, the position of the constellations, Bootes and Virgo, was properly referred to that season; for I admit that these signs allude to Adam and Eve. The Serpent you will find involving the pole of the ecliptic in his coil, where his situation properly marks his involving the world in evil;

and let me intreat you to observe, that even in your own delineation, as in every other, the *heel* of Hercules is on the *head* of the serpent. Whence, Sir, but from sacred writ, will you account for this circumstance? Is not this the promised seed bruising the head of the serpent, and *a sign of the Son of Man in Heaven?* Matth. XXIV. v. 30. You will also observe, that when the equinoctial point was entering into Taurus, the equinoctial colure passed through the head of the serpent and of Hercules\*. In this, Sir, there appears evidently a human endeavour to apply a divine prophecy; and at the same time that it is a testimony of human weakness, it is a record of a divine truth. In the Mosaic account there are circumstances which cannot have been derived from, because they cannot be explained by the mundane system, otherwise than he has stated it. Even you, Sir, have tacitly acknowledged this in a studied omission of the serpent's having seduced the woman. You point out fruit in the hand of the vir-

\* *Serpentarius treading* on the Scorpion, and squeezing the Serpent to death, is, I apprehend, a zodiacal expression of the same history.

gin, but where is the serpent presenting it? or whence is it that a serpent should *seduce* her to eat of forbidden or poisonous fruit, instead of fascinating her to destroy or devour her himself? Why was the fruit *forbidden*, or what emblem of autumn is there in *such* fruit? Certainly none. Why a particular fruit? When you had substituted two distinct principles for the tree of good and evil, how happens it that there is no substitution for the tree of life, the emblem of which \* Hercules bears in one hand (in your plate) whilst in the other he bears the club to crush the serpent's (Draco's) head? Again, Sir. It is a principle of the Mosaic history that the ill was permanent until the deliverer should come, and that he was not to come till long after Moses; and it is a principle of the same tradition, wherever it has obtained. This, Sir, is irreconcilable with any system derivable from the celestial revolutions. 1. For, the

\* It is said of the Messiah in the Cabbala, that "He shall put forth his hand and take of the fruit of life, and the fruit of that tree shall be the salvation of all that trust in him." Reuchlini, et Galatini Ap. (p. 737.)



choice in the fall was voluntary; the celestial revolutions are regular, and not of any choice but the Creator's. 2. The succession of seasons was established; the progress to moral evil was forbidden by him; the mythology could give no foundation for a prophecy, it being, as far as it related to the sun, previously an historic fact; whereas the prophecy might be applied to the facts in some degree, so far as to record its purport; the general and the particular reference to the fruit are contradictory; the autumnal fruits in general preserve life, and were to do so during the season of winter; the fruit which our first parents ate destroyed it, and the fruit of the tree of life was denied them; which, if the mythology had been derived from the mundane system, could not have been the order or the fact; lastly, it is impossible, in any sense, that the sun should be the offspring of the virgin, the woman originally here intended.

From all these considerations, Sir, the conclusion is evident, that the history of the fall must have preceded the arrange-

ment of the constellations; and when to this is added a tradition of a fall from a happy state to a state of moral evil, as universal as ancient history, which from its being found in the new and old world, as well in Mexico as in Egypt, and on the banks of the Euphrates and the Ganges, in Siam and in Japan, and from its uniformity must have been derived from one source, extant before the confusion of languages, it is not a mangled scheme of astronomy, or imperfect surmises formed on a maimed hypothesis, that is to subvert the faith of a Christian.

The tradition being then established to have been prior in order, the application of the facts is natural and intelligible. Beyond the period of the flood there appears no reference but to that of creation; and these two, which are the very points you wish to overturn, are the very points they prove beyond a doubt. To make the virgin afterwards become the mother of all living, presenting fruit, the symbol of the new-created earth, in autumn, was natural and well imagined; the history required the man

also to be represented with her, and without farther relation to the history, he is so. The tradition mentioned a serpent who brought death on all mankind; he is therefore represented as investing the very stay of the solar system. The prophecy mentioned that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and it should bruise his heel; bruising the head is *absolute destruction* to the serpent; this deliverer is represented therefore by a giant,\* who is in a correspondent situation. In the nineteenth Psalm we read, that *the sun rejoiceth as a giant to run his course*. The recording of the prophecy by the nearest, though far from correct representatives, and especially after a considerable interval of time, was to be expected; and the more, as it was wanting to the completion of the

\* The Arabs call this sign *Al Giathi ala Ruchateibi*, which has been corrupted into *Elgiazale Rulxbabei*, says Sherburne. This name is nearly a translation of the Greek *Εργονασι*, *Ingeniculus*, *the Kneeler*. All which only shews that the original name and allusion were lost. The attitude is that of a man whose heel was newly wounded, kneeling through pain of the part, and lifting up the club to execute vengeance.



scheme; it is therefore repeatedly expressed, first by Hercules and then by Serpentarius in the autumnal equinox; who, whilst he holds the Serpent in his gripe, sets his *heel* on the *Scorpion*. \*Orion in the vernal equinox, as I conceive, refers to the epoch of the flood. The prophecy, however incorrectly, having once been applied to the sun, the very first circumstance in the mythological account is that of his birth as a child, which is decisively emblematical of *creation*, and therefore as decisively in opposition to your hypothesis. He is born but once, the birth must then be *creation*. The birth being laid down, his path through the ecliptic for a year will naturally be the history of his growth, his labours, or his travels. Hence the ecliptic being אל אש, ארר or ארה, Orech, or Jerech-El-Esh, (Hercules) the *monthly path* of the God of Fire; he is also the son of Alcmena, בר חלק מני Bar halak Meni, *the son of the monthly division*. The name Her-

\* That Orion relates to the deluge the vulgar fable of his birth, such as it is, testifies sufficiently. I will also beg leave to suggest, that there seems to me

cules\* that of the course of the sun, seems to me to have been transferred to the sun itself,

to be in the first vision of the prophet Ezekiel, a representation taken from a sphere, since the man, (Hercules) the lion, the ox, and the eagle, are in the same order nearly in the colures of the ancient sphere. This seems to me to have been a representation of the divine glory under the emblems of the sphere, which appears to have been a record of true history. And it also appears to me, that this true history was in danger in the Babylonish captivity from the introduction of new constellations; and that this is the subject of the prophet's complaint, *of creeping things, abominable beasts, and idols, pourtrayed on the walls of the temple.* Ezek. chap. VIII. v. 10, &c. If Eurystheus be Horus Theos, as I think it is, then the story gives us Horus, or Apollo, directing the course of the Sun; and if the zodiacal constellations were invented about this time, it will make the reference still more probable.

\* The signification of the labours of Hercules will be evident from hence:—In his cradle he overcomes two serpents; and when grown up, another; the three heads of Geryon probably allude to the equinoctial, and the two tropical settings, which he seems to prevail over. To the derivations already given, I will subjoin the following *conjectures*. Cassiopeia, כסא פאה Casa-Paah, *the throne of the extremity*; i. e. the *chair* or throne near the pole. Cepheus, כפיס, *a beam*, properly a crooked one. In the sphere of Eudoxus, the equinoctial colure passed through the

and given to a constellation so called, at a late period, and probably by means of a translation into another than the original language. The tradition thus applied in the West, is no less evident in the East; that of creation is strikingly so.

The Hindu history, esteemed of the highest record next to Moses, declares that the Eternal Spirit first created the angelic host, some of whom having the power of imperfection, exerted it, and rebelled against him; who having, after admonition, persisted in rebellion, were plunged into darkness, and doomed to unceasing sorrows; that at the intreaties of Bramah, Vishnoo, and

hand of Cepheus. Cerberus, קרוב אור, *the light approaching*. Acharnar, at the extremity of the Eridanus, and the most southern of remarkable stars on the old sphere, is, perhaps, derived from עכר נר, *achar nar*; *turbavit lucernam*, because of the indistinctness with which he must appear in the horizon. Whether the name be Hebrew originally, or Arabic, and of a later date, the derivation will hold good.

Osiris Sihor, השחר Ha shahar, the dawn.

Orus, his successor, אור Or, the light of the sun.

Thoth, secretary to Osiris, תות Thoth, to make a mark.



Sieb, or Seeva, after a long period, the eternal one relented, and by his permission, Vishnoo in the second age created the world, and bodies for the rebellious spirits; that the duration of this world was to be for four periods (called yugs), the last of which, the *Cali yug*, which is the present, began about four thousand years ago; and in the preceding yug is fixed the birth of Crishna; consequently in the age before the flood\*.

The character of Crishna, according to Baldæus, was the eighth transformation of Vishnoo. The history of Crishna is given in the Aughtorrah Bhade, or Ved, as Mr. Hollwel informs us, (p. 70). The date of this Ved, according to the admission of the Bramins, is 1500 years later than that of the original ones, and is a corrupt mythology raised upon them, to which all the errors of the modern Hindu doctrines are to be referred. Mr. Wilkins mentions a singular fact in his preface to the Bhagvat Geeta, viz. that it appears from the Mahabarata, that at the time of the writing of

\* Holwell's India Tracts, edit. Lond. 1779, page 35, 42, 44, 49, 56.

that poem, the fourth of the Veds was unknown to the writer; a discovery which a learned Pundit received with astonishment. In his preface to the Heetopades, he also remarks that “ few Sanscreet books “ bear either the name of the real author, “ or the date of the year in which they “ were written.” From these circumstances it will appear, that the antiquity and even the authenticity of the Hindu writings is liable to some question, and the antiquity of their mythology in its present state still more. I have already shewn probable sources of an introduction of scriptural history into that of the Hindus, and think it evident in several circumstances of Crishna’s history, in which some parts of the history of the Messiah, and of the tradition of a Saviour, appear evidently to have been engrafted on an original mythology emblematic of the progress of the Sun in the ecliptic. Like Hercules, he is said to have killed a serpent\* in his infancy, and when grown up to have gone through many labours, and principally

\* See Sir W. Jones’s Essay on the lunar year, in the Asiatic Researches. This circumstance is not, that I find, mentioned by Baldæus.

in overcoming giants; and between these labours also are interspersed several ridiculous stories. The labours themselves have, however, a decisive reference. The life of Crishna being sought by a king, whom, according to a prediction, he was to overthrow, he is safely conveyed through a river under the guard of a serpent that held her head over the child. This is said to have happened in the rainy monsoon\*. His first victory is over the giant Sectasoor, who has the power of changing himself to a

\* His birth is celebrated in the month Sravana, which answers nearly to our July. Two months after, i. e. in September, the Monsoon changes. In Baldæus's plate of the incarnation of Crishna, the father of Crishna appears (with his son on his head) between a Lion-like figure and the Serpent. In July the Sun was also between *Leo* and *Hydra*. *Hydra* is the emblem of the *Samiel* of Arabia and Chaldea, and extended on the sphere from June to August, the period of the *Samiel*. This again determines the country where the sphere was delineated. *חמא* *Hamath*, the poison, signifies also a bladder, or any thing swollen up, and hence probably the story of the *Ovum Anguinum*. The *Samiel* is stopped by a city, and by a shower, (and, perhaps, breathing through a wet cloth might prevent or lessen the danger.) The Serpents said to blow up the egg are also said to be stopped by a river.



cart and oxen, emblems of the time of harvest. The second is more determinate, being his victory over the giant Turnawent, who had the power of transforming himself into a *whirlwind*, and whose *head* Crishna *reverses*; this is clearly the monsoon, which is reversed twice a year, in April and October. The third giant, Baccasoor, changes himself into a heron; and Crishna, changing himself into a flame of fire, burns the heron to ashes. After the monsoon, the waters decrease, and herons find their prey in the shallows for a while, but are soon deprived of the resource by the succeeding heats. The succeeding victories are in this order:—Over the giant Wickerack, who had the power of changing himself into a boy, and was conquered by a kick upon the breast in wrestling. Over the giant Agasoor, whose entrails were fire, and whom Crishna made to burst in pieces; over the giant Dawanael, who had the power of changing himself into flame\*, and who

\* The days, even during the rainy season, on the Malabar coast, says Baldæus, are so excessively hot, that there is no touching the ground without thin shoes called scripous, p. 583; the nights at the same time are excessively cold. Ibid.

having set fire to the habitations, and *the trees and grass*, was taken by the middle by Crishna, and forced to \* *swallow the flame again*. Over the giant Kasep, who had the power of changing himself into an ass, and whom, whilst under that form, Crishna swung by the heel \* *round his head*, and throwing him against the ground, squeezed the breath out of his body. Over the serpent Kallineagh, whose *head* Crishna *squeezes* to that degree, that not knowing what to do, \* *he twists himself around* Crishna's body, and Crishna swelling himself, forces the serpent to let go his hold, and submit to be *ridden* † by Crishna, and to promise never to do any farther injury. It was now the *dry monsoon*.

Thus far, then, from the wet to the dry season, clearly relates to part of the winter

\* These expressions of *swallowing again*, *swinging*, and *twisting around*, do, I conceive, mark the violent and stormy change of this Monsoon.

† This agrees very nearly with the representation of Serpentarius, which constellation was near the autumnal equinox, when the vernal one was in Aries.

half year, and the legends of the giants clearly denote the storms of that season.

The number of circumstances is however too great for that of the months ; and as Serpentarius belongs to the autumnal equinox, and the time of the birth of Crishna to July, it is plain that the circumstances have been confused, by applying the original fable to the opposite seasons of Malabar and Coromandel, which is confirmed by the festival in honour of Crishna in January, which, like that in July, is two months before the change of the Monsoon.

The remainder of the labours of Crishna are less clear, because they relate more to local circumstances ; and Baldæus, from whom I have extracted them, having collected all he could learn of his history without any apparent suspicion of their being more than a popular legend, has made it more difficult to perceive the original fable, though his evident ignorance of its tendency is an argument of its being genuine, and no fabrication of his own, or the relator's ; and it is more clear than any subsequent account that I have seen.



In the remaining season the number of adventures are encreased. Of those which have no reference to astronomy, the following specimen, which is among the former, will probably be a sufficient example, and if not, others will easily be found in Bal-dæus, &c.

“ Crishna’s mother being gone to milk  
 “ the cows, ordered him to hold a stick in  
 “ his hand to make the cows stand still  
 “ while she was milking; but finding she  
 “ had left her brass vessel, wherein she used  
 “ to gather her milk, behind, and not daring  
 “ to send Kisna (Crishna) he told her, he  
 “ would soon find a way to fetch the vessel,  
 “ without stirring from the place, and so  
 “ *extending one of his arms so far as to reach*  
 “ *the vessel*, he gave it to his mother, and  
 “ so re-assumed the shape of a child.”—  
 Others are equally \* ridiculous.

\* It may not be amiss to give an instance or two more to shew the intention of some of these interpolations.

Crishna is presented by a barber with a mirror, and by a gardener’s wife with vegetables, and by a cripple with perfumes (all valuable presents to a Gentoo) and he

To proceed to those of importance. At the close of the former, Indra being jealous of the reverence paid by the cow-herds to Crishna, *collects the rains* (dispersed in *twelve* peculiar places) and sends a deluge, which, that they might escape, Crishna orders them to go to the top of a mountain. They had no sooner obeyed his orders but he took the whole mountain on his little finger, and lifted them several times higher than the water could rise, whereupon Indra perceiving the power of Crishna, apologizes for the offence, and presents him with the cow of plenty\* (which threw out of her stomach plenty of provisions, clothes, and riches, p. 778,9.) This evidently refers to the return

restores the cripple to the use of her limbs, and promises eternal happiness to them all.

\* The story of the cow of plenty seems to have been a very early and general tradition. It is found in the Edda under the name of the cow *Oedumla*, from whose teats flowed four rivers of milk, and I remember to have heard the name *Hafod-un-nôs* (one night's dairy) in Wales, derived from a similar legend of a red cow, whose milk was inexhaustible for a long time. In the Edda the cow evidently alludes to Noah's Ark. —See Mallet, vol. 2, p. 18.

of the rains, on which the productions of the earth depend. This season, on the coast of Coromandel, comes on after the Summer

The explanation of this allusion, which I am about to offer, I acknowledge is impressive on my own mind. When Noah opened the window of the Ark to observe the state of the world around him, he perceived the earth, אֲדָמָה, *Adamah*, was dry. Gen. VIII. v. 13. In the subsequent, it is said, *Be fruitful* פֵּרוּ *piru*, and *multiply*, v. 17. Hence, then, the words פָּרָה הָאֲדָמָה *Parah haadamah*, will signify, *The Earth has brought forth*, or *Bring forth, oh Earth*. But the same words also signify *a Red Heifer*. The restoration of fruitfulness to the earth was a token of *the remission of sins*, and *oblivion of the past*. Was it, then, from the twofold meaning of the words, that *a Red Heifer*, (or a Cow) became at once a memorial of a past, and a type of a future redemption? I will not venture to assert that it was so, but I own it appears so to me.

A similar transferring of signification from sound seems to me to have taken place in another instance in a much more unhappy manner. "The Phallus," says Mr. Wilford, "was first publicly," (according to the Hindu accounts) "by the name of *Baleswara*—*linga*, on the banks of the *Cumundvati* or *Euphrates*." (As. Res. Vol. 3. P. 136. Ed. 8vo.) and *Baleswara* is "*Mahadevah*," (the great God) "*in the form of a child*."

*Bal-eswara-linga* is, I believe, בעל אשורי לבנה *Bal-ashuri-lenagab*. *The Lord of the progressive steps*, or *signs in splendour* or *at the correction*, (that is, of the year.) *Bal Ashur* may indeed be no more than the *Baal*



Solstice. The river Krishna, like the Nile, is flooded in the rainy season, and with similar advantage.

of Assyria. The words are Hebrew, the meaning of the last of which a similarity of sound may have corrupted.

The change of Bal-eswara into Lil-eswara is another singular story, (p. 382. vol. 4.) which marks the division of the month into thirty-one days; twenty-one of which the Moon is clearly visible, nine near her conjunction with the Sun, and the remaining one removed to an intercalary year. It is said, in the Rabbinical story of Lilith, that she was created in order to plague *eight* male and *twenty* female children from their birth, or to destroy them. Buxt. Syn. Jud. Cap. 2. that is, in one revolution of the Moon in her orbit, which alludes in a similar manner to a Lunar revolution, as Liliwara; and as ליל is *the night*, gives also the origin of the name, and ascertains the country, from which the story was derived, to be the one mentioned.

The Hindus, say *Lila-iswara, is Iswara, who gives pleasure*. The Jews make *Lilith* a hag, or mischievous spectre, who hovers about at night. That the two nations did apply significations directly opposite to the same word, may be perceived from their making the term *Hosanna* to be the proper name of an evil spirit, in the Bhagvat Geeta.

The whole story, as given by Mr. Wilford, appears to me to mean this: That by a slight of the Philosophers (the Munis) the regulation of time, and the seasons for tillage, &c. had been lost in India, and after some time recovered on the banks of the Euphrates,

The next exploits worth notice are, his producing a pearl-tree, killing the giant where time was reckoned by a combination of the Lunar with the Solar year.

The term Phallus I take to have been originally לִבָּא *Libra*, the sign of the autumnal equinox.

The Jewish civil year began with festivity at this season, and the sign *Libra* marked the time. The name לִבָּא the original of that of the Phallus, was easily to be mistaken or given for the other as the sign of fertility, and the astronomical sign perverted to an object of idolatry.

Having said so much of Jewish Astronomy, it will not be irrelevant to observe, that the Cabbala, as far as I can collect from Reuchlin, seems to contain a considerable portion of the science, but disguised in allegory. Thus far is evident, that it mentions the *nine spheres of the heavens*, as do the Hindus, that it makes *the sphere and circle* the emblems of the *Supreme Being*, and the *subdivisions of Angels*. Reuchlin's Rabbi says, *Octonos quoque angelos, in novem choros si distribueris erunt 72. Hæc autem 72 dicuntur unum nomen symbolicum, eo quod intentio eorum sit unum Deum O. M. significare.* P. 844. The binary divisions of the circle or  $360^\circ$  go no farther than eight, the subdivisions by five only to nine. This then should be eight choirs of nine Angels. The eight binary divisions are also figured by Seraphs. From these denominations it is easy to see how readily judicial astrology, and the doctrines of superintendant Angels, would follow when the *Shechinah* ceased to give answers. The Greek *Æous* are but the Hebrew *Gnolamin* or astronomical periods.

Kehy, his breaking the bow of the city of Mottera, which the giants could not manage ; killing an elephant furnished with warlike engines ; killing two renowned generals of his enemy, and finally killing Rajah Kans himself.

Of these, the first may relate to the pearl fishery, which begins in March, for Tavernier says, that the more rain falls the more profitable the fishery happens to be (Lib. 2. Chap. 6. in Harris's Collection.)—And the third to elephant-hunting, which takes place in November. The rest, I presume, relate to local circumstances, but have not been able to make them out. Sufficient, however, is clear enough to prove, that the adventures of Crishna are the emblems of the course of the Sun, as are also those of Hercules. The name Crishna is said to be only an attribute of Vishnoo, and it is also the name of the Nile, as Mr. Wilford has shewn in his interesting Essay on the Nile, printed in the Asiatic Researches. It is also the name of a river of Hindostan. The conclusion then is very forcible, that the original fable of the Vishnoo Crishna, the *preserver of the Nile of India*, is an adapta-



tion of that of *the preserver of the Nile of Egypt* to the climate of Hindostan, by a substitution of Symbols appropriate to the latter for those which, on the Egyptian sphere, marked the signs of the Ecliptic.

That such was the original fable is, I trust, evident ; and hence it will undeniably follow that it has been interpolated and obscured at a subsequent period, and not improbably in imitation of some spurious Gospels of the infancy and life of our Saviour. The Brahmins, it is well known, make no proselytes. Both Jews and Christians were anxious to do so. The Brahmins, till very lately, would never explain their doctrines to another nation ; the Jews and the Christians were anxious to spread theirs. Christianity was preached very early in the East, and to oppose it, the Brahmins, though they would not communicate \* their knowledge, might not have been unwilling to borrow, and pervert what might have suited their purpose,

\* The Brahmins have a sacred name of the Supreme God, which they will not reveal to others. The Jews have also one which none but the High Priest dared to pronounce. The reader will conceive the pleasure with

prevent a conversion to Judaism or Christianity, or to give some temporary consequence to their own tenets ; tenets which, however erroneous in their present forms, offer a wonderful collateral proof of the truth of the Scriptures, and which may be hereafter the very means of the conversion of those who hold them, by the display of their real origin in the word of God.—Amen.

which, while these letters were in the press, I read the following confirmation of what I have endeavoured to illustrate, in the words of so very respectable an authority as Mr. Wilford. “ In the days of Chandragapta, “ the Javanians were much respected.” Their learning and language would be so of course ; but what is of most importance is the following : “ Their new “ Chronology abounds with the most gross absurdities, “ of which *themselves are conscious* ; for though willing “ to give me general ideas of their Chronology, they “ absolutely forsook me, when they perceived my “ drift in a stricter investigation. As. Res. Vol. 5. “ P. 291.”

## LETTER XI.

SIR,

IT is an essential principle of etymology that it be supported and confirmed by historic fact, or other strong concomitant circumstance. Without this, there is no hypothesis so wild but it may be easily adduced to favour it. If they be considered in this respect, the etymologies you have given are most unfortunate indeed. In that system, from which you have wished to derive the doctrines of Christianity, neither among the powers of good or evil was there a leading name to afford an etymology for the purpose. Ormusd and Ahrimanes were alike untractable. Sabæism then having contributed towards a doctrinal system, the Gentoos and the Arabs are put in requisition to furnish etymologies for the name of him whose doctrines were unjustly, as I trust I have shewn, represented as so derived. "The sun," you say, Sir, "was called *Chris*, or Conservator, and hence



“ the Hindu God *Chris-en*, (or as you are  
 “ pleased to write it, *Christna*) and the  
 “ Christian *Chris-tos*,” p. 292. In the  
 original name *Kissen*, or *Kisna*, as it is  
 written by *Baldæus*, or *Crishna*, or *Creeshna*,  
 as it is written by Sir W. Jones and Mr.  
 Wilkins, an *aspirate* was wanting in the  
 first syllable, and a *t* in the second. By  
 supplying these, you have, Sir, succeeded  
 so far as to obtain some resemblance to a  
*Greek word*, which is a *translation* of the  
*Hebrew* name, whereby in the language of  
 the Jews, and during his stay on earth,  
 the author of Christianity was designated;  
 that is, *Messiah*; the *Messiah*, says St.  
 John writing to the Greeks, *which is* *χριστος*,  
 (*Christos*) *Christ the Lord*, that is, *being in-*  
*terpreted into the Greek*, John I. v. 4, an  
 authority which proves that the name in  
 use among the Apostles was originally  
*Messiah*; in Greek *Christos*, in English,  
*Anointed*; and as you possibly may find a  
 similar etymology for the French word  
*Oinct*, you will be welcome to the benefit  
 of the application. Permit me, however,  
 to observe, Sir, that *Crishna* does *not* mean  
 a *conservator*; the meaning of the word is

*black*. Vishnoo, indeed, does signify *conservator*, and Vishnoo Crishna the *preserver* of the *black river*, i. e. the *Nile*; and hence it is applied to the Sun as an epithet by the Hindus, as I have already shewn above, as to the God of the Nile. I might, Sir, from the few terms I have seen explained, ask with some appearance of reason, why was not the Hindu term derived from the Greek, since there is even of those few terms which occur in the translations from the Sanscreeet, a great part that must be referred to the same root, either in that or a common parent language. The Hindu language owes several of its terms of religion and science, and likewise of the arts, perhaps to the Greek, and certainly to the Hebrew, and that which is usually called the Celtic; and it is an observation which is well established, that such terms in general point out with certainty the place of that origin of the religion, science, or art to which they belong. The word *wine*, which runs through so many languages with little variation, refers to its origin to Syria or Palestine; the same may be said of the word *sack* (a bag) and many others which are found common to languages ra-

dically distinct. In etymology therefore it is an essential observation, that the relation of such terms as an intercourse of two nations, or an introduction of foreign customs or productions might impart, is no proof at all of the same origin of such languages. That the Hindus owed some remarkable terms to the languages above-mentioned, or a common parent, will appear from the following instances.

Hindu.		Greek.
Purrikat,	<i>The Ordeal,</i>	Πῦρ <i>Pur, fire.</i>
Purrickay,	<i>Assay of Metals,</i>	
Peetrus,	<i>Patriarchs,</i>	Πατέρες <i>Pateres, fathers.</i>
Atma,	<i>Soul divine,</i>	Ἄτμη <i>Atme, vapour.</i>
Gent,	<i>An animal,</i>	Γενετή <i>Genete, nativity.</i>
Gnan,	<i>Wisdom,</i>	Γινῶσκει <i>Gnōnai, to know.</i>
Gneya,	<i>The object of Wisdom,</i>	* Γινῶσκει <i>Gnōia, knowledge.</i>
Goon,	<i>A Quality,</i>	Γόνι <i>Goné, offspring.</i>

What is still more singular is the Greek application of the letter *a* as a negative in composition.

Hindu		Greek.
Agnan,	<i>Ignorance,</i>	Ἀγνοεῖν <i>Agnoein, to be ignorant.</i>

\* Found in the compound Ἀγνοία.



The same use occurs in other words not connected with the Greek.

## Hindu

Soor, *a good Angel,*  
 Asoor, *a not good, i. e. a bad angel,* }  
 Sat, *a being.*  
 Asat, *a nonentity.*

## Hebrew

שר Sar, *a prince.*

### Relations of a few other words.

## Hindu

Agnee, *fire,*  
 Deva, *a God,*

Dewtah, *Ditto,*  
 Avatar, *a decent of a God in*  
*human form,*  
 Boboon, *a sphere,*  
 Chandra, *the Moon*

Bodhe or, Budda or,  
 Bedou.

Gomedha, *an expiatory sacrifice,*  
 Reshee, *a prince,*  
 Nara, *a precept,*  
 Tama, *darkness,*

Ignis, *fire, Latin.*

Duw, *God, Welsh.*

Ydyw, *he is, Ditto.*

Duw da, *a good God, Ditto.*

Ab Athair, *Lord instructor,*  
*Irish.*

Biothbhun, *everlasting, Ditto.*

Killishandra, *the place of wor-*  
*ship of Chandra, Ditto.*

\* Bôd or } *existent, Welsh.*  
 Fôd }

Cymmmod, *a reconciliation, ditto.*

Rash, *a head, Hebrew.*

Nor, *light, Ditto.*

Tehom, *darkness, Ditto.*

\* This word is the substantive verb with the simple variation of the labial in many languages; *Hava*, Heb. *Bâdan*, Pers. *Beith*, Irish, *Bydd*, Welsh, *Fuit*, Latin.

Ošana, *the preceptor of evil spirits.*

Hosanna, *an exclamation at the feast of Tabernacles of the Jews, enemies to the Heathen Worship.*

\* Bram and Bramah, *the Creator*, ברא Bara, *to create*, Hebrew.

But of all the most remarkable is the Hindu name of Hell, which is *Gehennum*, (see Wilkins's Translations of the Gentoo Laws) this is the name of a place in Palestine, in which human sacrifices by fire were made in the time of Josiah, immediately before the Babylonish captivity. It is also a compound word גי הנום Gei Hinnom, *the valley of Hinnom*, and was also called in the time of Joshua *the valley of the son of Hinnom*, Josh. Chap. XV, v. 8. The name of the place in the valley where these horrid sacrifices were made was † Tophet; and this name *Gehennum* or *Gehinnom*, originally the name of a valley, had, after the ceasing

\* Whether Vishnoo be not originally הושיענו *evshionu* he saved us, and seeva שבב *he perverted*, I will not pretend to determine.

† The word Tophet is usually derived from Toph, a drum, and supposed to allude to a custom of beating drums to prevent the cries of the victims from being heard, as is still done in India, when a Bramin's widow

of the abominable rites, become a metaphorical name in the time of our Saviour, in the same country, as is evident from his application of it, Math. V, v. 22; and it is in this very metaphorical sense the very same word is used by the Hindus. How then did they acquire it? The very period of its being so used coincides with that in which I have already shewn, that they acquired other additions to their doctrines. That they have not only derived words but customs from more Northern climates, seems also evident from a circumstance which I mention merely as a suggestion for future inquiry; in many of their solemn rites the use of *Ghee*, that is *melted butter*, makes a necessary part of the ceremony, and in a country where the olive does not, I believe, grow. Does not this then indicate, that the ceremonies of the Hindus were derived from a country where fine oil, for which *Ghee* is the nearest substitute, was in use for

burns; but I rather think it should be derived from a root signifying heat or burning. *Taf*, in the Persian, and אָפָה *aphah*, to bake, are originally perhaps of the same root as *Tophet*; *Taf Oestus*, *Taftan fervens*, vide *Castelli, Lex. Hep.*



similar purposes, which it was we know among the Jews, and through a great part of the climate of Palestine.

I may seem, Sir, to have dwelt on these circumstances somewhat more than the immediate occasion absolutely required, but if the statements I have made shew the fallacy to which arguments of etymology are liable, and increase the caution with which arguments from, and traditions and customs of the East, are received, and promote a farther enquiry, they will not be without their use, since such arguments have in all forms, and with the most confident assertion, for some time past been brought forward to oppose Christianity, without proper examination, and credited beyond their value.

If any argument then, Sir, could be derived from the name *Christos*, it would be that where the word is, what you seem to have overlooked, a regular derivative in the Greek, which it is from *χρῖω*, *to anoint*, and not, as you suppose, *to preserve*, (for neither *Christos* nor *Crishna* mean a *preserver*) the

conclusion would certainly be, that the Hindus had it from \* the Greeks.

\* That the Hindu doctrines had spread over the northern countries, Mr. Maurice has fully shewn in his valuable works. In Schedius de Diis Germanus, and in a Treatise called *Die Obotriten Göttern*, a German Deity, the name of *Basanow* is mentioned, and another called *Syeba*. Are these *Viṣṇoo* and *Seeva*? *Syeba* is a Goddess, but her attributes are those of *Seeva*. She is perhaps the *Dragah* of India, the wife of *Seeva*. There's also one of the twelve names of *Alfader*, the Supreme God of the Edda, the names *Suidrer*, the exterminator, and *Suidur*, the exterminator by fire; they are on the 9th and 10th. Nor is it less remarkable that another of his names (the 6th) is *Omi*, the *sonorous*, (Qu. תומ Tumultuari) the same name with that of Chinese Om, or Omito, and Hindoo Aum.

Gangler, the Instructor in the Edda, is, I imagine, no other than Ganga-lehrer, *Instructor of the Ganges*.

The following coincidences will make it probable that the Edda and the Veds had at least the same origin.

The wife of Balder *burned herself* with him. The Gentoo wives burn themselves with their husbands.

Balder thinking his life in danger, prevails with the Gods to save him, and Friga swears the animals not to injure him, Edda, chap. 28. Herrinkessop obtains the same favour of Brama. Baldæus, page 773.

The Cow *Ædumla* agrees with the Cow of Plenty.

Har, Jafn-Har, and Thridi Har were brothers, Heri or Mahadeva, Vishnoo, and Brama, and in Egypt Ho-

To your hypothesis of the word *Yes*, from which you would derive another sacred name, as the whole force of the argument rests on *the three* first letters being found the same in both words, it is sufficient to say that the *first* letters of the name to which you refer are not *Yes*, but *Ies*, which leaves your inference without its premise ; and were the letters you allude to the original ones, they would be but *a part* either of the translation or the original name.

The ease with which the Christians are, (according to your representation) silenced, can from a *real Christian*, Sir, excite not fear, for he knows there is no cause, not insult, for it is not his character, but it must excite sorrow and compassion ; sorrow for errors of the weak, and crimes of the wicked, that have disgraced the doctrines ; and compassion for those who mistake the errors for

rus, Osiris, and Typhon were so likewise, and their respective favoured colours were white, black, and red in in order. The Welsh Triads are also indisputably of the same origin as the doctrines of the Hindus. The idea of the purification and revolving transmigrations of the soul are alike in both.



the doctrines, and have grounded objections upon them. Those which you, Sir, have brought forward to the Gospel History, I have examined with the utmost care which I could bestow on the subject, and with a sincere endeavour to find out the truth.—According to the abilities which God has given me, I have done so, and with a firmer and increased conviction in the result of the truth of the Old and New Testament, as Divine Revelation and true History. On other evidences of their being so, it would be intrusive for me to dwell after so many and so able men as have written upon them. The discussion has, I acknowledge, opened sources of confirmation new to me, and no less decisive than they were unlooked for in the commencement of my investigation; how far they may appear so to others, I leave to their reflection. A few objections still remain founded in a misconception of some of the doctrines of the New Testament, and which you, Sir, seem rather too hastily to have taken up as a just representation, and possibly from your residence in a country where the doctrines of the Church of Rome were, till lately, received and followed.—How unfortunately, let the Revolution of

France bear witness.—Sir, that Revolution is an useful lesson to mankind, of the danger of establishing an error.—I cannot proceed to consider the mistakes into which you have been led, without recurring to that period in which a shallow policy, and an unhappy remissness to give it the gentlest name, (I ought to call it a weak and sinful surrender of the truth) prepared the scene of all the subsequent tragedy your nation has since put in action. The period I speak of is that when, at the close of the wars of the League, your otherwise excellent Monarch, Henry IV. became a Member of the Romish Church. When wearied with contention, and threatened with assassination, he was persuaded to embrace an error. Alas ! Sir, he was not alone to blame. The ministers of religion, the poor wreck of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, harassed and faint after the storm, and raised at once into consideration, were cajoled, in the name of Peace, into a dereliction of that duty which could alone have secured it. They defended their cause at the conferences, says Sully, but weakly, or not at all. Some days they were even dispensed with entirely,

while the zeal of their antagonists employed all their effort to bring the King over to the Church of Rome.—And what was the event? Did they acquire peace? No.—Did the King effect a reconciliation as to himself? No.—Were the advantages of the Protestants established? No.—But they established *popery, as containing no dangerous error, which is contrary to the truth*; and having established this, *they* had no right to object to the revocation of the Edict of Nantz. Nor was this all: when the errors of Popery were exposed by the enemies of Christianity in general, the nation at large, which had by their error falsely believed Popery to be Christianity, mistook the subversion of the heresy for the subversion of the Gospel, and losing the hold on eternal life, has fallen at once into a dreadful void, wherein all the elements of society and of religion have become a chaos of fury and desolation. So tremendously have the sins of the fathers been visited on the children to the third and fourth generation of those whose dereliction of their God and their religion had all the effect of hatred to both. May God grant it may rest there, that the



errors of the Church of Rome may soon cease for ever, and that no endeavour to restore, or countenance or favour them, may draw a future vengeance down, of which we have so terrible an example, that God will require the souls of those who, by neglect or favour, remain or persist in error, at the hand of those who are the means or the accessaries.

You tell us, Sir, of Pagan rites and Pagan habits in the Church. It is she that has chiefly borrowed and introduced them.—You tell us of the celibacy of the Clergy, of her assumed, and blasphemously assumed power of forgiveness of sins, of her fatal and false doctrine of \* Transubstantiation, her idolatry, her Pagan worship of angels, her fictitious purgatory, her sealing up the scriptures, and

\* This doctrine is founded in total ignorance of the Jewish mode of expression, whose language requires the very form of words *this is my body*, to express the meaning, *this is a type of my body*; at the very time the bread broken in the passover, after supper, is called Levi: it is a part of the middle one of three set upon the table at supper, and reserved by the head of the family to be distributed after supper, to each present, and each has a glass of wine: the uppermost cake is named *the High Priest*,

her bloody tribunals. These are not Christianity, they are as contrary to the gospel as repugnant to reason, they are within the jurisdiction of both, and condemned by both; they are now as an expiring torch, after a conflagration, more of offence than terror, and yet not without danger.

I will not dwell, Sir, on errors which have been applied to Christianity; I will consider merely what you object to the only doctrines, in the only authority a Christian can rely upon, the Bible. The prominent features of Christianity are certainly that benevolence to others, usually called Charity, the virtue of government of the passions, and thirdly a resignation to the will of God. The latitude and spirit which you have given to each of these is such, as certainly has no just foundation in the gospel. I can no where find that *charity* is *meanness* and *insensibility*, the *government of the*

the middle one *Levi*, and the lowest *Israel*: and a Jew says accordingly, *this is the High Priest—this is Levi—this is Israel*—he could not properly express the same allusion in any other form; and its peculiarity could appear only in a translation, which the Greek is.

*passions, their extinction, or the fear of God servile or unreasonable.* To take a proverbial or a general expression in its strictest and extreme sense, is cavil, not argument. Would you, Sir, peruse with attention that portion of scripture, from which the sentence you quote is taken, the sermon on the Mount, a portion which has been the admiration of the best and wisest men; you will find many expressions of the same nature, and which were never intended to be taken in the absolute and severest sense. The precept you adduce *to him that strikes thee on the right cheek, turn the other also,* as well as the precept, *if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out,* addressed to a multitude of headstrong passions, conveys a forcible injunction. But to say either conveys the exact measure of obedience, is an outrage to the text, and to the idiom of the language, not only of that, but of any other country. The doctrine it inculcates is forbearance and forgiveness of injuries. You say, Sir, this will encourage the wicked by impunity. From you, Sir, who have grounded the connection and stability of society on the mutual resistance of all the



component parts, the observation is not inconsistent. To others the precept may appear in a very different light. If there be any one on which the mutual connection of society depends, it may appear to be this very one. You do not observe, Sir, that this precept affects man in his individual, rather than his political capacity. You have omitted to state that the gospel acknowledges as necessary, and confirms public justice and regular government. The author of Christianity himself submitted to the officers of the one, and paid tribute to the other. How then could his precept be meant to weaken either? You will not deny, Sir, that forgiveness of injuries tends to the public tranquillity, nor does it tend less to private happiness, unless the sanguinary spirit of revenge, which involves whole families in unsparing destruction, promote it better. When Socrates asked, if an ass kicks me, shall I kick him again, was his virtue degraded by it? Or if a christian says I forgive, because it is the will of my Maker, and the condition on which I hope to be forgiven, is his virtue degraded? Does he feel himself degraded by a forgiveness

which the offender has no other share than the forbearance? Most certainly not. Were it not out of reverence to God, but out of fear of the offender, this would, I acknowledge, alter the case, but where the principle is what it ought to be, the forgiver is the superior. Neither is forgiveness of injuries, or patience under them, insensibility or servility. Christianity, when it forbids revenge, does not command intimacy or familiarity, undeserved by a mutual reconciliation; though it commands a readiness to do good, it does not command the affections further than the suppression of revenge. The spirit of Christianity, Sir, is so far from injuring society, that it is *the only one* in which society can be secure. What are, on your own principles, the causes of the revolutions of empires? Exaggerated passions, sordid selfishness, ambition, and violence; what is the only effectual check to these? Christianity. And how so? By constraining the passion to keep within just bounds by the highest sanction. When the Apostle commands us to mortify our inclinations, he aims not at inclinations in general, but

*corrupt* inclinations, and what is the catalogue of them? They are to be found forbidden in the ten commandments, and in the last chapters of most of the epistles; and of these, which, Sir, would you desire not to be extinct? Is it impiety, or murder, or adultery, or theft, or perjury, or avarice, or their subordinate vices, that ought to be preserved for the benefit of society? It would be an indignity to the gospel, in this respect, to defend it further. I think, Sir, I ought to question whether your information, as to the parable of the Prodigal Son, be not from hear-say; indeed I am frequently tempted to think you never have read the New Testament. Permit me then to inform you, that the father does not treat the Prodigal Son with greater favour than the other. When the Prodigal returns repentant to his father's house, the father receives him with open arms; is this the act of a despot? The father in a transport of joy celebrates his return by a feast; is this the act of a despot? The brother ungenerously and harshly resents the favour shewn to a repentant son, as more than ever done to himself. The father tells him



the occasion ;—*this, my son, was lost and is found*, that the favour was but for the occasion, for, adds he, to mark his justice, *thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine*. Is this the act of a despot, acting by no rule of equity? In the parable of the lord of the vineyard, there is no injustice, but there is a dignified liberality: the first labourers who went into the vineyard were paid their due, and if they *whom no man had hired*, who had waited with honest anxiety for employment, till the close of the day, while the others were labouring with a certainty of recompence, were generously rewarded for the rectitude of principle, which prefers poverty to a crime, there was no injustice; *the eyes of the others were evil, because the lord of the vineyard was good*.

If, Sir, hereafter in some awful hour your mind should receive the light of the gospel, and your return be that of the repentant son in the parable, may his reception be yours, and may you find him, whom you have so unjustly denominated a despot, no other than as in these parables.

To sum up the Christian Morality, “ It  
 “ is,” you say, “ throughout unfriendly to  
 “ human intercourse, a code of misan-  
 “ thropy celebrated to give men a disgust  
 “ for life and society, and to attach them  
 “ to solitude and celibacy,” p. 306.

To give this any other answer than the following sentences of scripture, would be a degradation to their excellence and their beneficent tendency.

“ A new \*commandment I give unto  
 “ you, that ye love one another, as I have  
 “ loved you, that ye love one another.”  
 John XIII, v. 34.

“ Let every man seek not his own, but  
 “ every man another’s welfare,” 1 Cor. X,  
 v. 24.

\* That the *measure* and *extent* of the love here commanded made the precept in the form here delivered *new*, in morals, as our Saviour declares, I have endeavoured in my observations *on the Principles of Christian Morality*, to make evident; it was also new as a precept to his disciples, and the Jews at the time: our Saviour expressly declares it is a *new* commandment; I know no higher authority.

“ Marriage is honourable in all,” Heb. XIII, v. 4.

“ A Bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife,” 2 Tim. III, v. 2.

“ There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage, this beginning of miracles did Jesus, in Cana of Galilee,” John II, v. 1, 2, 11.



## LETTER XII.

SIR,

IN France, in the Year 1790, I remember well that it was a favourite observation on the speeches of a popular leader, that if any thing could be said in favour of *the people* he would be their steady friend, and every step of the revolution has been an useful, and it is to be hoped, a final, though a dreadful lesson to mankind, how, in following such friends, they sacrifice to any one class of the species the well-being of another.

It is to the same class you appeal for the subversion of all moral, as he did for the subversion of all political principle.— May their sufferings from the sacrifice of the first prevent others still more tremendous, whose issues are not within the limits of human events, nor their infliction within the dictate of a human decree. In these kingdoms, Sir, with a just pride it may be said, that property and principle are both

too general to be risked on speculation ; and knowledge, too general to suffer, even the most ignorant, to be easily the dupes of it. In the wide range of society, you admit, that all cannot be learned, all cannot be governors, all cannot be politicians, all cannot be moral instructors. Your fancied legislators, arrogant and confident as they are in their own wisdom, while they would withdraw the attention and respect of the multitude from one set of instructors, do not throw any of it idly away ; it was not to diminish the deference, but to change its direction, and with all the ardour of self-love and dignity of self-estimation, to transfer it to themselves. It had been usual for men to make some allowance for human infirmity, to make ample concession to good intentions, to be grateful for past benefits, and in the great and the good to venerate the example, to cherish their memory, and avail themselves, with caution, of their labours ; your legislators reject them all, and like your other legislators, unhappily too real, in their jealousy, winnow with a storm and scatter the grain with the chaff ; and when the ignorant are brought forward, like the

fox from his carnage, they apparently retire, in order to seize on a new victim, with more determined certainty. It is to the *ignorant* the decision is submitted, and if such decide on interests temporal and eternal, what is wisdom? What is science? or rather, what is to become of the illiterate? Are they to confine themselves within the extent of their own ideas, and credit nothing beyond their own investigation? Is the seaman not to steer till he can account for the magnetic direction of his compass to the pole? Is the farmer not to plough till he has ascertained the doctrine of vegetation? Is no man to walk till he has developed the theory of muscular motion, or to trust his eyes, because he cannot explain, or have it explained, how he sees? Full as weak is the objection against a mystery in religion, as any of these would be in common life. Such objections are as wicked as they are weak, because they can arise only from a predetermined opposition. To the ignorant, the only question is where they can best receive instruction, on which they may safely rely and act, and they must of necessity found their belief on the credit of



their instructors, established by proofs of their probity, and of the excellence of their doctrine, within their own comprehension. Allowing then your herd of ignorant people to be as much so as you have represented them, and it is more so than I believe any nation ever was, they would certainly, as such, have a claim to an answer to their objections; there is little in them indeed, and of that little there are some which a *real* ignorance might blush to advance; their first question is, “Of what importance are these discussions?” (of religious doctrines.) There are some questions that stun the mind, but however it may waver for a moment, it is not as to the answer, but the sensation which ought to prevail. Of what importance is it whether there be a God? Whether he made man? Whether he will reward the just? Whether he will punish the wicked? Whether the apparent inequality of enjoyment in this life may be demonstrated wisdom in another? Whether our being has an end, or revelation an evidence in truth?—I confess, Sir, I know no answer worthy of the question, nor an excuse for it, but insanity.

Again, they ask, "How can it be required of us to be versed in the numerous histories you have related?" To which the Doctors you have created reply with a correspondent complacency; "It is not necessary that you should acquire all this science, we possess it in your stead." It is well it is no worse, they are still on a par with your legislators, both require that *the multitude* should be *docile*; these indeed however do not exert the same energy here, because they might have been told some home truths, which would be very inconvenient. A Christian doctor would have said, that all that is absolutely necessary to salvation *is clear enough to every plain and honest understanding*; that there is no moral precept in the dialogue or in the gospel in which you can change its form, whether it be affirmative into a negative, or negative into an affirmative, without reducing it to such an absurdity, as the present understanding must reject. That the sacred records do contain subjects fit for the contemplation of the most acute perception and profound judgment, is very true, and if the ignorant wish to increase their

knowledge, they must be instructed. He who wishes to travel must rely on the Geographer, or the traveller who has gone before him; he may profit by a map, though he cannot study the projection of the sphere.

“ That the belief of one man may be  
 “ the substitute of that of another,” or  
 “ that the belief of any man has no practical tendency,” p. 300, 1. or “ that God  
 “ will condemn men for the neglect of a  
 “ rule with which they are unacquainted,”  
 (p. 303.) are assertions that a Christian need not notice. It would be idle to discuss what was never maintained; it would be no less so to insist, that different ages and different states of society may require peculiar laws. (*Ibid.*)

To return then, when your ignorant men reply, that they cannot understand the scriptures, I would ask, have they tried? Their questions shew no symptoms of it; they ask why does our common father require us to believe the same propositions with a less degree of evidence than others? I answer, because the testimony of one incon-



trovertible evidence is as sufficient as that of one thousand, and there is *sufficient* evidence; however, the granting of more may be a favour, the requiring of more is presumptuous.

Your ignorant men at length have the advantage, as might easily have been foreseen, over the wise; the doctors resolve the judgments of God into mysteries, and a sophistical and shameful plea that his justice ought not to be restrained by the rules of human justice; whilst such are held out as doctrines of Christianity to the really ignorant, they may do mischief, and if suffered to pass unnoticed, to others also. Was it then the purpose of Christianity to deliver mysteries? No, Sir,—the very reverse. It was to *reveal* what, till the coming of Christ, *had been* a mystery, and was to be so *no longer*, that Jesus Christ, the son of God, was to be the Saviour and Judge of the world, and rending the vail of the sanctuary, to discover what *till then had been* hidden, the mercy seat of the Most High. That the justice of God may act in some cases on an evidence, which

is not entirely within the cognizance of man, is true; but is it therefore for so short-sighted a being as man is, to impeach his decrees, or to infer an affected plea to support a crooked policy, or a depraved conduct? Justice itself is invariable as the throne of the Supreme Dispenser of it, and such is his as far as his will is made known to us. He has in his word given us no varying criterion of it; but in one precept its sum; "as ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them, for this is the law and the prophets."

Your ignorant men affect, indeed, a readiness to accede "to the religion that most clearly fulfils the ends that all propose to themselves," (p. 303.) It would have become a wise man to have set before them whatever advantages might have been drawn from each; and to have warned them against errors wherever they subsisted. It would have become a good man to treat with some decency even those who were in error, and at least, with the most worthless of adherents to have remembered, that all were not worthless. Your conclusion,

Sir, had indeed led too far, it was liberal beyond the limits of our purpose. To those who know the least of the gospel morality, there was imminent danger of that reference in too cool and serious a manner. You did not suffer it to be made, and drown the wish for conviction in an artificial hubbub of the calumnies of all sects. Whilst the gospel is the rule of Christians, they defy their adversaries to the utmost. It is nothing to say, that some Christians have done wrong; did their wrong find a justification in the gospel? Most assuredly not. If schisms have arisen, they have had no encouragement there. They, Sir, who give every indulgence to themselves, can have very little to spare for others, and seldom grant any. They, whose pleasure is their only rule of conduct, may not easily conceive the difficulty they have never experienced, of adhering to any other. He who always sails with the wind may be very little able to judge of the care and skill requisite to contend with it. The censures of such men are always the most unsparing, they are always ready to infer an error in the rule from



a partial failure in the application. They attribute nothing to the error of an ignorant zeal, nor reserve any compassion for the mistakes or miscarriages of a sincerely good intention; sometimes indeed they may be willing to infer, that when the best may fail, it would be in vain for them to make the attempt, were there not another inference more suitable; that it is more easy to reject than to examine, for where the result may be conviction, it must be of a fearful importance; in the present case, the opposition is of a more decisive nature. The bible is open, and its history is misrepresented, its precepts mistaken. Were Christianity what you, Sir, have exhibited as such, its merits would be small indeed, yet even so it is the best of the group. But again I repeat it, Popery in full is not true Christianity, its peculiar doctrines are no part of it, and it is against them only your objections hold good, and there they do so. The Christianity of the gospel is not only uninjured by them, but remains as pure as the sun from the exhalations of an impure atmosphere.

The heresies that have arisen in the church have never arisen without the lamentations of good men in every age. But were they therefore not to be opposed? If men will teach for the laws of God the inventions and traditions of men, are they therefore not to be opposed? You, Sir, will hardly deny that they ought; in every age they have been opposed, and must be so. It is a sacred duty not to give up the truth.

But, Sir, even thus, and with all sorrow for, and detestation of the errors of the church of Rome, it would be as ungenerous as unjust, not to pay some tribute of veneration to the sincerity, the piety, and the zeal, however in some respects mistaken of many, of that church, and especially her early missionaries, and not to endeavour to rescue them from that indiscriminate censure which would involve all in one general condemnation. Any one might with admiration contemplate a Father Paul, and a Fenelon, a Father Ricci, labouring for twenty years to introduce that doctrine on which he was persuaded the salvation of the Chinese depended. Read, Sir, the travels

the labours, the austerities of Francis Favier, and Las Casas, and blush for the charge of avarice and ambition against these and such men.

You reproach the Church, Sir, with avarice and ambition. Let me ask you, Sir, were these vices so peculiar? Was there neither in the contests of kingdoms and the revolutions of States for the last fourteen centuries? I presume it was by liberality and humility that the Church has been plundered of all, within these few years, in France. I remember, that when the National Assembly of France was pressing the three Estates to unite in one Chamber, as it was called, and the Clergy had unwisely acceded to the proposal, in a very short time one of that body exclaimed, *Est-ce pour nous egorger que vous nous avez invité au nom du Dieu de Paix? Is it to cut our throats that you have called upon us in the name of the God of Peace to unite with you?* Deeds, Sir, are a more convincing reply than words. The answer has been fully convincing.—If you think, Sir, I mean to palliate an error, you are mistaken; what I



mean here is, to shew that it is very possible the objection to an error may be the prevention of another's wish to engross it. For the first three centuries, the Church had little to boast of but its Martyrs and its immortal hopes—it offered no prospect to ambition but superior sufferance, no temptation to avarice but treasures beyond the grave. When an Emperor became a Christian, Paganism inundated the Sanctuary, the Tripod was placed above the Cherubims, and the Ark of the Covenant locked up for ages. The name of Christians was assumed to cover the translation of the seat of power; and men void of principles, but full of policy, found no difficulty in a combination of means for their iniquitous ends. In every age they have been reprobated by the learned and the good; and it is to those very Scriptures you exclaim against, that at this day, you are indebted for the freedom you have exerted so unjustly against them of disquisition.—But avarice and ambition were prevalent, and *enslaved* mankind.—Sir, there was one circumstance in which it were to be wished the power of the Church were perpetual. In those ages men

committed crimes with reluctance, and reflected on them with repentance and remorse. The acquisitions of the Church were not indeed of a nature to compare with the general mode of acquisition in the same age. However eager it might have been to possess, it could acquire, as the Church only, by *donation* or *bequest*. Were the donors then always such, as in all cases to have seen nothing further than *the Church* in the donation? Had *they* no prospect of benefiting *their own families*, by providing a *secure retreat* for such as might be *exposed to poverty, incapable of making their own fortunes*, or *after a struggle with the world*, at that time in perpetual conflict, *desirous of retirement*? Permit me to ask you, Sir, on whom have the political and principal advantages generally devolved? Were they only on the poor, the unallied, or the ignorant?—No, Sir. However circumstances and the obligation may have occasionally vindicated the gift of God, the gift of man has more frequently rested with the connection from which it proceeded. When the internal peace of kingdoms became somewhat secure, the donations were as hastily

and as unmercifully resumed, as the most abject and despairing sinner had ever given one.—Yet, Sir, much is due to them—monasteries have been the asylum of learning. Even those who were ignorant of their value, have been faithful guardians of the treasures committed to their charge; they have in difficult times been the mansions of peace; to the poor they have been the dispensaries, and liberal ones of food, and raiment, and consolation. Like every other institution, abuses in them were not inevitable, but these ought not to preclude our sense of what we owe to them. In the established reformed Church, whatever may have been her advantages, to each individual it was, and is, merely a *tenure for life*, of all tenures the *least valuable*. Its places of emolument are comparatively *few*. I repeat it, when compared with every other property, they are but *few*; for as the charge is general, I must refer to particulars; and of these the greater part are immediately and fairly involved in the general course of political power and property.—In the inferior orders it is a livelihood, and



with not many exceptions it is no more, and in numerous cases hardly so much. The property of the Church is now, Sir, where it has a property, established *by law*.—To the law it has submitted its right.—Where, then, can its possessions be a grievance?—Is it because *it does possess*? If the most sacred rights give a claim, which of them has it not, unless that of the sword be included? If donation or bequest can confer, it has these; if antiquity of possession and prescription, and no other possession so remote; if the decrees of the Legislature, none has been more fully and frequently confirmed. What right is there which, if this were overthrown, would then remain secure?—Not one; for that of forcible possession does not deserve the name.—To establish a precedent of such a nature, as the overthrow of these rights, is certainly an important step towards a dissolution of all property; for who that consents to it can repine, if in his turn he submits.—The objection of avarice, where it cannot be exerted beyond a legal limit, is futile, but its object—let men look to it.

As to the government of men's minds the power of the clergy is merely *declaratory*, not *absolute*, and the gospel, the rule and measure of their doctrine; and with any other rules you can or may produce, they are very willing to let them abide the test of *reason* and *experiment*; I say experiment, for without it much may be feared. The king of Prussia (the great Frederic) desired the best mathematician in his dominions, the celebrated Euler, to give a plan for a machine to raise water to a certain height. The plan was given in, and no doubt every part arranged, with all the precision of theoretic science, for less could scarcely come from Euler, or durst have been presented to Frederic. Alas, Sir, it would not raise a drop. The mathematic theorist had possibly forgotten that beams were not lines, and that fluids may not always act with a determinate force; and the political theorist may also forget that men are not machines, nor human wills always under a particular bias. He alone, Sir, who first arranged the springs of action, and whose wisdom pervades the whole system of being, can give adequate and unerring rules of

moral conduct, and sure grounds of a principle, and of reliance for our faith, and to know them is man's highest wisdom. Where there is no immediate inspiration, knowledge must be acquired by study, and that the ignorant may be instructed, it must be imparted by those who have acquired it. Is there then no need of instructors, and if there is, what more is necessary than religious instruction? Be a rule ever so clear or so plain, is there nothing in calling the attention to it, in pointing out the extent, in directing the application to particular cases? Is there nothing, Sir, in giving steadiness to principle, and gravity and sublimity to devotion? Is it nothing by solemn and rational forms to prevent the extravagance of a heated imagination, and the absurdities of ignorance, and to offer a worthy adoration to the Supreme Being, by the mouth of one devoted to the awful duties of delivering their prayers and praises, comforting the afflicted, encouraging the repentant, reproofing the wicked, and rejoicing with the just? Such, Sir, are the services you disclaim, and the benefits you wish all to reject; with what pros-



pect I am willing to let their rejection in your own country be the warning.

It is time, Sir, to draw towards an end of this discussion, which in its course has not been without much satisfactory research to myself, however fatiguing. In examining the traditions of various and distant nations, they are found to concur fully in the substance of one original tradition, that their creeds are so far from being contradictory, that in the most decisive particulars they agree in the existence of our Supreme Being, the Creator and origin of all, in his having given a revelation to mankind, in the tradition of an age of purity, of a fall, and of the deluge, (in that of the last, so circumstantial as to identify it decisively;) in the promise of a future deliverer, in the prediction of a future life of reward to the good, and punishment of the wicked. In these, Sir, all that have records or traditions of authenticated antiquity agree and confirm the scripture; and prove that in the scripture only is the history clear and express; that in the rest, it is involved but not lost in

fable, and we conclude without hazard of a proof to the contrary, firmly and securely, that the scripture history is truly the word of God, that the Heavens and the Earth unite their testimony to it.

Of the doctrines of the Gospel your idea, Sir, is strangely and lamentably erroneous. There is in it neither indiscriminate severity, nor partial preference; it declares *there is no respect of persons with God*, Rom. II. v. 11, and that *in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*, Acts X, v. 35; its evidence internal and external increases by discussion, and is more convincing as it is better known. To those who can judge of your objections I will now leave it to consider their weight. To those who are less equal to the subject, I will beg leave to offer the plain and affecting observation of Naimbanna, an African, who, a few years ago, was sent over to England for instruction. His words were these, “ When I saw that all good  
“ men read, and valued the Scriptures, and  
“ that all bad men opposed them, I was

“ sure they must be what they were said  
“ to be—the word of God.”—That such  
may be your conviction, and that you may  
enjoy the blessings it has revealed, is the  
earnest prayer to Almighty God, of

Sir,

Your sincere well-wisher,

P. ROBERTS.

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FINIS.

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